

The Third Sunday of Advent

Collect

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen

[Isaiah 35:1-10](#) . . . the prophet envisions a time of abundance and healing for Israel.

Isaiah 35:1-10

35:1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus
35:2 it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

35:3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

35:4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

35:6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

35:7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

35:8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

35:9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

35:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

[Psalm 146:5-10](#) . . . A hymn of praise to the Lord, who forms the world and rules in justice, who heals and cares for the needy

Psalm 146:5-10

146:5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God,

146:6 who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever;

146:7 who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the

prisoners free;

146:8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

146:9 The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

146:10 The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

Or

Luke 1:46b-55

1:46b "My soul magnifies the Lord,

1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

1:48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

1:49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

1:50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

1:51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

1:52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

1:54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

1:55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

James 5:7-10 . . . an exhortation to patient expectation in preparation for the coming of the Lord

James 5:7-10

5:7 Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

5:8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

5:9 Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

5:10 As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

[Matthew 11:2-11](#) . . . Jesus responds to a question from John the Baptist about his mission and then describes John's ministry

Matthew 11:2-11

11:2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples

11:3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

11:4 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see:

11:5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

11:6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

11:7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?

11:8 What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.

11:9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

11:10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

11:11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Sermon

Ryan Ahlgren is pastor of First Mennonite Church in Richmond, Virginia, and a remarkable preacher. He doesn't use notes; he just stands and delivers. The sermon title is, "[You'll Have to Ask My Neighbor](#)".

