

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ADVENT III

DECEMBER 14, 2014

5:30 PM SAT. AND 8:00 AM SUN.

John the Baptizer is back.

Back in our Gospel.

Back in the craw of the religious establishment.

And can you blame them for their righteous doubting?

This strange, wild-eyed renegade and his ragtag followers –

Without portfolio or authority, baptizing and calling the nice folks a bunch of snakes and such.

So can you blame the Pharisees for asking to see his ordination certificate?

A little authenticating identification, please.

“If you aren’t the Messiah, and you aren’t Elijah – the herald of the Messiah – and you aren’t the Prophet that God promised Moses he would send to us,

Then what do you think you are doing?

Who the devil are you?”

Good questions, and John has good if not totally satisfying answers.

“I am preparing the way for ALL of that,” he tells them,
And I am baptizing with water to get you ready for the baptism that
Messiah will bring – the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
So Wake Up,” he tells them all, “Get ready. He is already among you.
Your salvation and the salvation of creation are almost here.
Prepare the way of the Lord.
Watch out. Here he comes!”

And the people responded,
“Huh?”

And so do we.

It is not easy to understand our part in all of this, is it?

We know so much more than John’s questioners did,

But it is still difficult to know how we are to respond.

Even though we yearn to appropriately celebrate the coming of the
Christ Child,

Even though we truly would like to prepare ourselves and our world for
his return as our Judge and Redeemer.

What would John say to us this morning?

What are faithful Christians like ourselves supposed to do this Advent?

Well, it just so happens that the people who put together the lectionary reading for today hit a home run, and selected the epistle selection we just read.

Paul gives the Thessalonians and gives us the answers.

Listen again to his gracious words.

Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing.

Give thanks in all circumstances.

Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise the words of the prophets.

Test everything.

Hold fast to what is good.

Abstain from every form of evil.

That is our Advent charge and challenge.

And Paul promises that if and when we do that,

The God of peace himself will sanctify you entirely,

And your spirit and soul and body will be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then he concludes with this great reassurance.

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do this.

Thanks be to God.

