



Third Sunday of Advent

11 December 2022

**The Episcopal Church of the
Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio**

Seeking to know and serve Christ in loving
service to the campus, the community, and
the world.

Today's printed [Order of Worship](#)

Gaudete Sunday Lighting the Candle of Joy on 3rd Sunday of Advent

In lighting another candle in the Advent Wreath, we notice we are three quarters of the way through the season. As we get closer to Christmas, the anticipation grows, especially as today we get to light the candle of a different color: the pink or rose-colored candle. In many parishes, the color the church wears today is the same color as the candle to symbolize the growing excitement as we near the celebration we wait for. It is also a reminder as we wait for Jesus to come again, this is not something to be feared, but can be waited for with joy.

We sometimes mistake joy for happiness, but joy is a spiritual practice like prayer. Joy is the connection to God; it is recognizing God's grace at work in the world even through disparities and sorrows. Though they may be small, even small joys can reveal God and lead to hope. And hope can help us through anything.

This connection is symbolized in our Advent Wreath by lighting the candles from the last two Sundays. The lighting of the Advent Wreath is accumulative not just to show where we are in the season, but to illuminate the gifts of Advent: hope, peace, joy (and next week's theme of love) are connected and with us always.

Lessons

Lessons for the Third Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Old Testament – Isaiah 35: 1-10

Canticle 15 (Sung)

New Testament – James 5: 7-10

Gospel – Matthew 11: 2-11

<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

The 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 for ever. *Amen.*

The Gospel



Matthew 11:2-11

WHEN JOHN HEARD IN PRISON what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 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. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

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? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 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.’

“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.”

Gospel Engagement Question:

What do you imagine John the Baptist is feeling when he sent his message to Jesus?

The Sermon

Higher Way Deeper Life

There are many ways to handle disappointment when things don't go the way they always have in the past, when people or situations fail to live up to expectations, or when a situation doesn't go the way it was planned, or the hoped-for outcome didn't materialize. Some folks handle disappointment by adapting. Others reflect on the difference in their expectations and the outcome. Some people can accept disappointment and forgive. Then there are those who struggle with disappointment in ways that make them feel doubt, grief, anger, and resentment.

If you can relate to the later, then today's Gospel might give you some comfort to find John the Baptist struggling with his disappointing reality. John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament style prophets. He lived in the wilderness because that is where God's people experienced transformation from slavery under Egypt to the freedom to worship God and live the way God wanted. John baptized people in the Jordan River because their ancestors began their transformation by walking through the Red Sea without getting wet. The baptism of John was that of repentance and a sign of a renewed commitment to follow God's ways more closely. John didn't wear the robes of power or status; he wore the clothing of a prophet because he wasn't under the thumb of either Rome or the religious establishment. And John was arrested and thrown in prison for speaking out against the man Rome proclaimed King of the Jews for living contrary to the ways of God.

Which is where we find him in today's Gospel. From his prison cell John sent a message to Jesus that does not look like John had much faith in Jesus. John had been preaching about God's Messiah coming with the fierce fire of judgment and would punish all the evil doers. Yet there John sat in prison, Herod and Rome were still in charge, and Jesus had not led a clever heist to break John out of jail, thus vindicating him.

So, he sent Jesus a message that ultimately asked: who are you, really? Are you the one we've waited thousands of years for? Or do we need to keep waiting? Because as Messiahs go, Jesus was pretty disappointing for not doing what John expected or wanted.

It often appears Jesus is not so good at answering questions, especially direct questions. Instead of giving a direct answer to John's question, Jesus takes us back to the first lesson we heard today from the prophet Isaiah who described a vision of justice, renewal of creation, mercy, and restoration as the coming of God's kingdom on earth.

Incidentally, this is one of my favorite Old Testament passages because it is the official Bible passage of my alma mater, Northland College. Northland's motto is taken directly from this passage which is "A Highway Shall Be There". Often people who are not familiar with the Bible did not understand why the first environmental liberal arts college in the country would have such a motto, as it sounded like environmental degradation instead of restoration of creation. The reference to the Biblical passage is a nod to Northland's founding by Lutheran missionaries 130 years ago. It is also the heart and soul of Northland's intention to provide a transformational educational experience where students learn how to be part of the world and community while living a higher value of care for creation and each other. Recently, Northland hired a Biblical scholar to retranslate the phrase so that it better reflects both the passage and Northland's credo. The new translation is: "A Higher Way. A Deeper Life." It's a good translation, as Northland grads – no matter our chosen profession or callings – we do try to live in a way that positively impacts the places where we work and live.

This is what Jesus was pointing to when answering John the Baptist's question. Instead of giving a direct answer, he responded by pointing out the impact he was having. He was not having a destructive or punitive impact, but he was restoring wholeness by healing and forgiving. True he wasn't healing every person on the planet, he wasn't working in big numbers, just one person at a time as a sign of what was present and what is to come and that God values each of us. Jesus brought with him a higher way and a deeper life, one of mercy and forgiveness through which Jesus is not only fulfilling scriptures, he is bringing God's kingdom to this world.

Jesus also spoke to the crowds about who John the Baptist was. He wasn't a political figurehead, nor an agent of the government. Jesus did not insult John for his question or question John's faith or ministry. Like the Canticle we sang this morning, the song of Mary called the Magnificat warns us, there are those who will interpret Jesus' acts of healing and forgiveness negatively because they disrupt the status quo by reversing the way things are which can make some feel

uncomfortable. When someone isn't punished the way we want, it can feel like injustice. Jesus' higher way and deeper life breaks the cycle of violence and punishment with mercy, healing, forgiveness, and restoration one person at a time, in such small ways, it isn't easy for everyone to understand or accept, maybe even cause disappointment.

The season of Advent offers us the opportunity to reflect on disappointments like John the Baptist did. This being the third Sunday in Advent, we lit the candle of a different color in the Advent Wreath because today is Gaudete Sunday, a day to rejoice. This theme of rejoicing seems out of place with today's Gospel where John is in prison nursing disappointments and possibly making us consider our own response to unmet expectations, unexpected changes in our lives, or losses that feel like they just keep coming. Sometimes I suspect we mistake the religious expression of *rejoice* with the unbridled gorging of self-indulgence. Rejoice isn't like a party. It's not about feeling good or giddy like you might feel after your team wins the big game. Rejoicing is not dependent on how we feel. It is a spiritual practice like prayer that calls us to be open to and aware of the grace of God active in the world, like we heard in all our readings today.

Those acts of grace may not be large, loud, or extravagant, but they are signs of God present and at work making an impact. A few weeks ago, I met a group of students who were worried our Covid-19 Memorial had been damaged intentionally and called me late at night to alert me to the damage. While the damage was most likely caused by accident, probably by one of the deer that have been around, that encounter revealed God's grace through the connection the students feel to the Memorial. And that connection makes them care about it. That is a tiny step of restoration, connection, and is evidence one of our ministries is having a positive impact on the lives of our neighbors. To some this might seem small or insignificant, but not to God. To God no one is small or insignificant, all of us are of immense value, because caring is a form of love and a connection to that higher way and deeper life. And that is cause for rejoicing even when facing disappointments.

A sermon by The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, the Third Sunday of Advent, 11 December 2022, at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, Ohio.

Sermon Engagement Questions:

How do you handle disappointment?

What could you change to help you find another way to respond to

disappointment?

Please include in your prayers

IN OUR WORLD, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray for the people who are suffering from war, especially the people of Ukraine, and we pray for all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

IN OUR DIOCESE, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops.

IN OUR PARISH, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community.

THOSE WHOM OUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED: Bud and Carol, Chris L., Gloria R., Jean R., Miriam, Scott, Sharon, T.C., Richard Carlson, Ann Carswell, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Richard DeNune, Roy DePue, Norm Fox, Lindsey and Regina Golden, Debbie Hunsberger, Bob and Nancy Jackson, Peter Kachenko and family, Ann Lloyd, Jeff Maiden, Julie Nehls, Betty Oltorf, Donald Oney, Sandy Oney, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Virginia Richards, Flo and Jack Roach, Ai S., Michael Vaughn, Mary-Anna Welch, Emily Woolsey and we pray for all who care for them. **

BIRTHDAY: Pamela Lawson (12/11), Jim Karageorge (12/12), Earl Stump (12/12), Abi Morgan (12/14), Malin Irwin (12/15)

FOR THE DECEASED: William Shepherd

** Full names are normally not published online. However for the Sunday 10:30 service we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or grahammowery@aol.com.

At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched anytime later.

<https://cincinnati.cathedral.com/ccc/join-online/>

Washington D C -- there's much to explore at the the National Cathedral's online portal. <https://cathedral.org/worship/>

Coming up on the Calendar

Wednesday, December 14, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl, Nehls Hall

Thursday, December 15, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting

Sunday, December 18, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, December 18, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist (Discretionary Sunday)

Saturday, December 24, 7:00 p.m. - - Christmas Eve (Preservice rehearsal for Christmas Eve will be at 6:00 p.m. on December 24. Prelude music will begin at 6:45 p.m.)

Sunday, December 25, 10:30 - - Holy Eucharist (Christmas Day)

Wednesday, December 28, 9:30 a.m. - - IHop for Christmas breakfast celebration

Notes & Announcements (additional items in the Friday Bulletin)

Organ music for Advent

**Enjoy a midweek break at Christ Lutheran Church on Mill St.
Wednesdays, Dec. 14 and 21 at 12:15 p.m.**

Dec. 14: Marsha Reilly and Kathleen RistinenJonas
Dec. 21: Tony Bruno



Christmas Services

Please join us in celebrating the joyful birth of our savior.

Christmas Eve 7:00 pm December 24

Christmas Day 10:30 am December 25

Both services include Holy Eucharist.



Christmas Poinsettias

Once again, the Altar Guild will place large poinsettias only on the altar for the Christmas season. If you would like to contribute to that fund, checks can be made out to Good Shepherd with "Christmas poinsettias" on the memo line. If you wish to honor someone with either a memorial or a thanksgiving, please get those names to Barbara Martin (barbara@chogs.org) before December 20. Thanks from the Altar Guild.



Calling any and all singers !!!!!

Extra singers are needed for December services - especially Dec. 19 and Christmas Eve (service at 7:00). Rehearsals are Sunday morning at 9:15. There will be an extra rehearsal between Dec. 19 and Dec. 24. Please Contact Marsha Reilly at

mareilly1@columbus.rr.com or mareilly57@gmail.com or 740-818-6475.

Christmas Poinsettia

David Burton sends along the following regarding this year's Crop Walk.



Adele Hanson, coordinator of the Athens Crop Walk, received an email from Church World Service regarding the distribution of the funds for our designated local nonprofits. On November 17, 2022 checks for \$552.63 were sent to Athens County Food Pantry and Community Food Initiatives. These checks were based on our walk total of **\$4,421.06**.

Kelly Latimore: [‘What is our church art for?’](#)

Check out the above link -- As we well know Iconographer Kelly Latimore creates art that uses a traditional style to depict contemporary people and, he hopes, bring people together.

Published in ***Faith and Leadership*** A learning resource for Christian leaders and their institutions from Leadership Education at Duke Divinity.

For Bishop Transition News and Updates

[-- Follow this link --](#)

If you want to help the folks who have been negatively impacted by climate disaster and war anywhere in the world (including Ukraine) please consider contributing to [Episcopal Relief and Development \(ERD\)](#) which is the official ministry of the Episcopal Church.





Some people, such as Mother Deborah (above), are awake and active early in the morning and others, such as myself (below), are finally awake by the afternoon. Regardless the time of day, that wonderful blue sky under which all the other elements of beauty and interest flourish is something to behold.



Contacts, Information

Quick Links

[Parish website](#)

[Sermons](#)

[Parish calendar](#)

[Staff](#)

[Campus Interest](#)

[E-News Guidelines
and Back Issues](#)

[Diocese Southern Ohio](#)

[Bishop Transition](#)

[\[E\]Connections](#)

[Episcopal News Service](#)

[Episcopal Journal & Café](#)

Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines
for in-person worship](#)

In light of local conditions we request all persons wear masks inside the church building **regardless** of vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office hours the thrift shop and chapel are available for individuals. Masks are required.

CrossRoads Café is temporarily closed.

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley,

[DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

The above takes you to the Parish page where you can find instructions or donate on-line via PayPal, If you have a preference, please indicate on the the

Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Dana Carlson, Junior Warden, at 740-664-2022 or by e-mail at carlsondana@hotmail.com.

For emergencies, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877).

The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or barbara@chogs.org.

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, 64 University Terrace, Athens OH 45701

740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org
www.chogs.org

"Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

Office Hours:
Masks are required.

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday
740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org

Blessings !

Church of the Good Shepherd | 64 University Terrace, Athens, OH 45701

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