

DECEMBER 15, 2019
THIRD SUNDAY
OF ADVENT



Advent is the season of joy.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 11:2-11	Jesus and John the Baptist
Monday	Isaiah 35:1-10	The return to Zion
Tuesday	James 5:7-10	Patience in suffering
Wednesday	1 Thessalonians 5:12-22	A final greeting
Thursday	Nehemiah 8:9-12	Ezra reads God's Law
Friday	Philippians 4:4-9	Paul encourages the people
Saturday	Psalms 146:5-10	Praise for God's help
Sunday	Matthew 1:18-25	God is with us

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 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. **Isaiah 35:5-6 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Lord God, you who bring healing, hope, and joy to the world, give us the faith to trust your never-ending care through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, you who made heaven and earth, we thank you for this food, a sign of your never-failing love. Amen. (Psalm 146:6)

A Blessing to Give:

May God strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is near. (James 5:8)



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

Joy to the World



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- How would life be different for you if you were blind or deaf?
- God's promise that the blind will see and the deaf will hear seems too good to be true. In what ways does this promise bring joy instead of disbelief?
- John the Baptist wondered if Jesus was the awaited messiah. What would you tell John?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Isaiah 35:1-10.

The people of Israel were exiled far from home, imprisoned in Babylon, a foreign land. The people were wondering if there was a future for them. Did the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob abandon them? We can ask similar questions. Will our children have faith? Has our Lord abandoned us? To all such concerns and questions Isaiah responds with unbelievable images of God doing amazing things: the blind will see; the deaf will hear; the lame will walk; and those who can't talk will sing for joy. God makes the impossible possible. Advent reminds us of God's power and promise that is like no other. Advent is a time for joy and patient waiting (James 5:7-10) for God to do what only God can do, that is, save God's people. How does God's promise of care and salvation bring you joy?

Pray: **Come, Lord Jesus, help us to trust your amazing healing power for our lives and our world. Amen.**

SERVICE

Psalm 146 is a song praising God's help. Happy are those who "give food to the hungry" (v. 7). Make cupcakes or cookies and write the words hope, peace, and joy on them. Put them in a bag or box and include a card that reads "Praise the Lord" (v. 1). Deliver them to an organization that feeds the hungry or to those who are homebound or living alone during this Advent season.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

This week we light three candles on the Advent wreath. They are the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy. Today's candle reflects the joyful return of God's people to Zion.

Say: This is the third week of Advent. Advent means "coming." We are waiting for the coming of Christ. Let us light the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy. [Light three candles]

Read: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 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 (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Respond: Let us walk in the light of Christ that gives joy.

Pray: **Lord Jesus Christ, we await your coming with hope, peace, and joy. May we see with the eyes of faith the work of your kingdom in our lives and world. Amen**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org