Advent III

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Date: 15 December 2024

Preacher: Father Randall Russell

[0:00] In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Unknown to some, there are actually two Sundays in the church year where all of the church's pyramids, that is the frontal on the altar, the frontal on the pulpit, the frontal over at the lectern, and even the priest's vestments may be pink.

One of those Sundays is the fourth Sunday in Lent, and the other is today, the third Sunday in Advent. However, there are still several reasons why many churches may choose not to use pink for these two Sundays.
First, pink is only an option and not a requirement, so most churches just stick with purple. Second, pink pyramids and pink vestments cost a lot of money, so purchasing them isn't always financially practical.
And third, although I am sure there are plenty of people who would enjoy walking their priests processed down the aisle in pretty pink robes, I assure you that neither of your priests are among them.
Nevertheless, you will notice that every year the third candle on the Advent wreath is always pink. And now you know why.
[1:29] Pink is supposed to represent joy. It is supposed to stand out from all the rest. Pink is supposed to remind us that there is still joy to be found in the midst of all this penitential purple, in the midst of all this purple, in Advent and Lent.

Yet truth be told, I have always thought that pink is a rather odd color for the third Sunday in Advent, especially when it is paired with this morning's gospel reading.
For every year on the third Sunday in Advent we read, Now when John the Baptist had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he said to his disciples and said to him, Are you the coming one or do we look for another?
And well, that doesn't exactly express joy or cause anyone to think pink, does it?
I mean, John the Baptist sitting in prison, waiting to be executed while questioning whether or not the Lord truly is the Messiah finally come?
[2:45] Well, that just sounds depressing and sad. But I think it's important to remember that that is exactly how a lot of people feel around this time of year.

Around this time of year, there are a lot of people who feel just like John the Baptist must have felt while lying in prison, waiting to be executed.
They feel sad, lonely, anxious about the future, and even have some doubts. So happy third Sunday in Advent, everybody.
Cheer up. We just lit a pink candle. See? But that doesn't really do it, does it? For many, those holiday blues still remain.
And that's why the season of Advent really needs to be more than just candles and decoration. During the season of Advent, we need to repent.
[3:49] We need to have a real change of heart and a real change of mind in order to properly prepare for our Lord's coming. And oddly enough, that is what John the Baptist, of all people, seemed to forget.

But I do not fault him for it. Again, sitting in prison and waiting to be executed does not sound like much fun.
Therefore, from prison, John the Baptist understandably asked our Lord, Are you the coming one? Or do we look for another?
But in many ways, we all can relate to John the Baptist, especially when life doesn't go the way we think it should go. Whether it is a death in the family, a divorce, the loss of a job, bad news from the

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doctor, or some other life-changing calamity, when life doesn't go the way we had hoped, we all are tempted to ask, Lord, is this really a part of the plan?
Are you really still in charge? Or should we look to another? Or should we look to someone else to lead and to guide and to provide for us?
[5:20] But do you remember what Jesus told John the Baptist when he asked, Are you the coming one? Or shall we look for another? Our Lord told John's disciples, Go and tell John the things which you hear and see.

The blind see and the lame walk. The lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up. And the poor have the gospel preached to them.
In other words, our Lord told John the Baptist, John, stop focusing on yourself and your own understanding. And start focusing and trusting in me.
Repent and have a change of heart and change of mind. And open your eyes to all the good that I, the Lord, am doing in the world. For what Old Testament prophet ever healed the eyes of the blind? And what Old Testament prophet ever healed the ears of the deaf? As Isaiah the prophet foretold, These are all things that only the Messiah would do.
[6:32] Great signs that the Christ had finally come. So if any of us wish to be rid of all those holiday blues, let us repent.

Let us repent by stop focusing only on ourselves and our own pain, worries, woes, and understanding. And let us start focusing on Christ.
And let us remember and never, ever forget. Joy and repentance go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other.
After all, isn't that what the colors of the Advent wreath teach us? Don't they teach us that penitential purple and joyous pink always go together?
For again, if any of us are focused only upon ourselves or in our own understanding, then we aren't focused upon Christ. We aren't focused upon the joy, the immense joy that our Lord has already come into the world and is in fact coming again.
[7:49] Therefore, repent and have a change of heart and a change of mind. For joy on this side of glory does not mean what most people think it means.

For joy does not mean that we will never, ever have any doubts. But it does mean that when we do doubt, God will give hope to all those who are wise enough to listen.
And joy does not mean that we will never, ever make any mistakes. But it does mean that when we do make mistakes, God will always, always be quick to forgive all those who turn to him and repent.
And joy does not mean that we will never, ever suffer. But it does mean that all suffering has an expiration date for all those who faithfully await the triumphant coming of our Lord.
For behold, Jesus Christ has come. And Jesus Christ is coming again. For on the last day, the blind will see once more and the lame will walk.
[9:07] The lepers will be cleansed again and the deaf will hear. And those who died in Christ will rise from their graves. As the poor rejoice to see the gospel which they have heard come to its fullest fruition.

Come to its fullest fruition at the second coming of our Lord. So repent and rejoice.
For those two always, always go hand in hand. Which is why every penitential season of the church year always ends in profound joy.
And the same could be very well said of all those who repent now and await the joyous coming of our Lord and our God, Jesus the Christ.
In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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