

**December 14, 2025—The Third Sunday of Advent**  
**The Rev. James Wyatt**

## **Not Yet**

“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” It makes sense that John the Baptist would ask that question, given what we read last week about the Messiah he expected. The guy who was talking about how “the ax is laid to the roots of the trees” and “the winnowing fork is in his hand” and “one who is more powerful than I is coming after me”—well, I can see why John might have been not quite sure that Jesus was in fact the One, the Messiah he expected. I think the unspoken question behind John’s question is something like, “Hey, where’s your winnowing fork?” Where’s the vengeance and the terrible recompense we heard about from Isaiah this morning?

And Jesus’s response to John’s uncertainty is beautiful: “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.” Clearly, based on all this, Jesus is the one who is to come, the kin-dom of heaven really has drawn near, and there’s no need to wait for anyone else. Just tell John what you hear and see.

Over the last several months, I’ve heard from a number of you about what you hear and see. We’ve talked in the past few weeks about where you’ve experienced transformation in our life as a church—in our prayer and worship, in our study and learning, in our life in community, and in our action and service to our neighbors. And some of you have shared more private stories with me, stories of how God’s grace and mercy have carried you through situations ranging from inconvenient to inconceivably awful. What do you hear and see? What has convinced you that Jesus is the one who is to come? Or even if you’re not fully convinced, what brings you back here, Sunday after Sunday? What have you seen and heard that suggests that the kin-dom of heaven really has drawn near? Where do you see the fulfillment of God’s promises, even now?

This Sunday—the third Sunday of Advent, when we light the rose-colored candle in our Advent wreath—is called Gaudete Sunday, which means “Rejoice.” This is particularly a day to celebrate all those signs of life blossoming around us like flowers in the desert, all those signs pointing to the kin-dom of heaven dawning in our midst. For me, I continue to rejoice in the life and energy I find in our worship together. I rejoice in the ministry of our Fresh Start program, the way we’re a warm and welcoming place in the midst of the cold and wet, and the way we testify to God’s love across the whole region by serving our neighbors in that way. I rejoice in the way this church is thriving even with only a half-time priest because you all take on so much of the leadership and operations of this place. I rejoice in the fact that on any given Sunday something like a quarter to a third of the people here are under the age of sixteen, and the hope that gives me for the future. I rejoice in what I hear and see: the kin-dom of heaven is very near—a glorious invitation for us to participate in God’s work in the world.

And... I think there’s a flip side to our observance of Advent. and to John’s question—“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” There is some pain in that question, pain that makes the question very personal for John the Baptist. Remember, John was in prison when he sent his disciples to Jesus. So when he asks, “Hey, where’s your winnowing fork?” you might imagine him saying, “I’m rotting in prison here. I wouldn’t be surprised if Herod kills me as soon as he gets tired of me. So... maybe now would be a good time to overturn the world order? Don’t you think? And all that stuff about the blind and the lame, the lepers and the deaf and the dead and the poor, that’s all great, but um... what about the prisoner? Isn’t there something in your mandate about letting the prisoner go free?”

And I think that question is a lot harder to answer. For all the evidence around us of the goodness and grace of God working transformation in our lives, and the kin-dom of heaven drawing near and God’s promises coming to fulfillment even now, we are also surrounded by daily reminders of the not yet—all the places where the world is so broken and so desperately in need of divine intervention. John’s question—“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to

wait for another?”—it might come from an immigrant in an ICE detention center Or from someone experiencing homelessness, drenched in the unrelenting rain of the past week. Or from someone whose home was flooded or washed away in all that rain. Or, really, from any of us. We all have plenty of examples of the brokenness of the world in our own lives, not to mention what we see on the news.

All of us live out our lives in the tension between the not yet and the even now—between what we see and hear of God’s kin-dom blossoming in our lives and in the world around us, and the daily reminders that we live in a broken world in desperate need of God’s hand. The Holy Spirit is moving, busily at work in this place and all around the world. And yet many of our lives and the lives of our neighbors are just broken, seemingly beyond repair. Often it seems like all we can do is just try to patch up the broken bits around us as best we can, while waiting—trusting, hoping, believing that wholeness and renewal and abundant life and all the promises of God still await us, whether in the future or in some time out of time, in God’s eternity.

The season of Advent is all about that tension, about being stuck in between the not yet and the even now. It’s about our pain, our grief, our brokenness, and how desperately we need God’s healing and salvation. And it’s about our hope for the world to come, and about how that hope is part of the transformation we experience in the world around us, and in our own lives.

Advent is *not* about denial. Gaudete Sunday is not about putting on a happy face and going through the motions of celebration because that’s what society expects from us. It’s not about pretending things are perfect, pretending God’s promises are completely fulfilled, and hiding our tears behind boughs of holly.

Advent is a promise that God hears our cries, God sees our tears, God knows our grief—and all that sorrow and suffering *matters*. It matters to God—it matters so much that the Son of God is coming to live among us and share in all that sorrow and suffering and tears and grief with us, as one of us. That is the source of our hope and the cause of our joy.

“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” “Go and tell John what you hear and see:” that the kin-dom of God is blossoming forth all around us, even and especially in the midst of all the suffering of the world and all the grief and sadness in our lives. The whole of God’s promise is not yet fulfilled, but even now, joy and hope and love find a way to take root and grow, to blossom like flowers in the desert.

Thanks be to God.