



Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

## Third Sunday of Advent

December 15, 2024

LECTIONARY #9C  
Zephaniah 3:14-18a  
Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6  
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### REFLECTION

John the Baptist called God's people to repent and be baptized in preparation for Christ's coming, and they ask him what they should do. They've repented of their sins and wrongdoing—so what happens next?

The answer John the Baptist gives them is simple: if you're repentant, then change your behavior. First, John tells the crowd to share what they have with the needy. Next, John addresses people who benefited from the Roman occupation of Judea. Rather than shame the tax collectors and soldiers for their positions, John exhorts them to use their power justly: Don't defraud people. Don't accuse the innocent. Don't extort bribes.

So, what then do we learn about repentance from today's Gospel? John's instructions are focused on specific, realistic actions each person can take to make amends and care for others. True repentance involves acknowledging injustice, taking personal responsibility, and making concrete changes.

### ACTION

Pray and ask God to help you identify one area where your behavior is sometimes selfish or unloving. Look especially at any social, structural, or personal advantages you may have and ask whether you have used your gifts for the benefit of all. Perhaps there's someone you've treated unfairly or failed to help when they needed it. Make a plan for how you will change your behavior in immediate, concrete ways. Consider asking someone you trust to hold you accountable for the change you want to make in this part of your life.



Check out this short clip from Dr. Brené Brown's talk on shame. <https://youtu.be/5C6UELitWkw>

### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you think John the Baptist would answer the question, "What should we do?" if asked by different people in our society?
- ❖ Can you think of anyone in your life who has changed for the better?



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# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## LECTIONARY #9C

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Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

## Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

### Leader's Context

Our reading today continues the message of John the Baptist that began on the Second Sunday of Advent. John preached a message of repentance as he baptized believers. Today, we hear people asking John how they can show the good fruit of their repentance. John responds by giving concrete examples that illustrate a change of life. Faith is made real through our actions, just as a tree is known by its fruit. There should be a noticeable difference between a repentant person and someone who is just paying lip service. The young people are encouraged to reflect on those people in their life who give witness to repentance and faith and how they themselves can show their repentance.

**Q FOCUS:** *Our faith is lived out by our just and merciful actions.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

The Third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday. *Gaudete* is the Latin word for "rejoice" and comes from the first words of the psalm that is assigned as the introit to Mass this Sunday. We have talked about Advent being a time for preparation, for transforming our hearts and lives so that we are ready to receive Christ when he comes at Christmas and at the end of time. We must repent and be open to God's word. In the midst of our preparation, we take time this Sunday to rejoice because we know that our salvation is near. The Advent candle that we

light this week is rose colored, as are the vestments the priest wears. This color represents joy and anticipation.

### Church Teaching Connection

"We feel that this question—"What shall we do?"—is ours also. Today's liturgy tells us, in the words of John, that it is necessary to repent, to change direction and take the path of justice, solidarity, sobriety; these are the essential values of a fully human and genuinely Christian life. *Repent!* It sums up the message of the Baptist. And the Liturgy of this Third Sunday of Advent helps us to rediscover a special dimension of repentance: *joy*. Whoever repents and approaches the Lord, feels joy" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, December 13, 2015).

## Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

### Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Luke 3:10-18

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed."

Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

► Have you ever heard the phrase "actions speak louder than words"? What does that mean?

In today's reading, John the Baptist continues to preach about the need for repentance. As crowds flock to the man in the desert, they ask him how they can show their repentance.

In Greek, the word used for repentance is *metanoia*, which means to change one's mind or change one's direction. In this context, to change your mind or direction is an act of will. You choose to change course, to deviate from the path you had been on to a new path. Repentance involves the whole person; the mind, the heart, and the body must be adjusted to a new way of thinking and doing.

► How do you show others that you have repented?

For John the Baptist, and for Christians today, repentance is not just about feeling sorrow or recognizing guilt. It is not just an act of prayer or a set of words to say. These are important things to transform our spirit, but repentance is also an action. It is shown in the way we live our lives. John gives practical examples to his audience: If you have two jackets, share one. Share your food with the hungry. Stop cheating, even if it is easy to do. Stop lying. These are concrete signs that a person has changed their ways. They have stopped focusing on themselves and have shifted their attention to God and to following his path.

The Christian life is not an easy one. People make mistakes and perfection is impossible. But John's message today reminds us that when we fall short, repentance is possible. We can change. The choices we make can look different when we turn back to God. These choices are made every day and in every moment.

Many people rightly point out that your words and actions may be the only Gospel that someone encounters. As a believer, you are called to give witness to your faith. Your personal commitment to prayer and worship are important, but they are internal experiences. These spiritual practices build you up, giving you the strength and courage to live out your deeply held beliefs. Your external actions, like the way you treat others and what you do when no one is looking, tell the world about your faith.

► Who is someone you recognize as having a deep faith? What kind of a person is this someone? How do his or her actions reflect his or her faith?

Living in sin is such a burden. It steals our joy. It is full of shadows and darkness. Our world becomes so small, and we can't see what is going on beyond us. John knew this truth and called people to follow the path of right living, in which there is freedom and joy. When we follow Christ and repent of our ways of sin, we become radiant with God's love and that shines out to the world through all our actions.

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 92.

**Repentance is more than an internal attitude; it must also be embodied in our actions.**

**Prayer is an internal response to God’s love, and just action is the external sign of your faith.**

**There is joy and freedom in following Christ.**

## Act on the Word

### Repentance in Action

*For this activity, you will need regular sheets of paper, small pieces of paper, pens, and a basket.*

Have the teens form small groups and give them regular-sized paper and pens. Share with them that the advice that John the Baptist gives to the crowd in today’s Gospel is tailored to his audience’s particular professions (like being tax collectors or soldiers). In this activity, the young people will develop practical advice for themselves and their peers about how they can show the fruits of their repentance in their daily lives.

First, have the groups brainstorm a list of some behaviors that they notice among young people their age that do not reflect Christian values. This can be things like gossiping, bullying, disregard for authority, self-centered behaviors, and other things. Once they’ve identified some of these behaviors, then have each group discuss what the opposite actions of those behaviors would be. For example, if someone is gossiping, maybe the advice John the Baptist would have given would be to speak the truth and

affirm others. For bullying, maybe the positive action would be to compliment the person or write a positive comment on someone’s social media post. Encourage the teens to be very practical in their advice—what would these positive behaviors look like in today’s world?

After the groups have had time to work on their lists, have them share with the larger group what some of their suggestions were. Once all the groups have shared, pass out the small pieces of paper so that each person has one piece of paper. Instruct the teens that each person should write down one negative behavior they themselves need to repent of. The teens can move away from one another if they feel they need privacy to write this down. Then collect the small papers and place them in a basket. Inform the teens that you will be throwing these away and invite them to commit to changing their behavior in the coming weeks so that it better reflects their repentance and faith in Christ.

### Closing Prayer

*Almighty and eternal God,  
your promise of salvation is our hope,  
your word is the stronghold of our faith.  
Keep us ever faithful to your commands  
and always near to your Son, our Lord  
Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*