# Advent 3 B

MDP of God

Today is, what liturgist call, Gaudete Sunday -*that’s Latin*

 It means **Rejoice**.

 We are called, on this 3rd Sunday of Advent, to rejoice at the nearness of our salvation

And our readings today carry that theme through

**1st reading (Isaiah) says**, “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul ... He has sent me to **bring glad** tidings to the lowly, **to heal** the broken hearted, To proclaim **liberty** to the captives and **release** to prisoners ...For He has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice.”

Most scholars believe this section of Isaiah was addressed to people who had returned to Jerusalem after the exile and they had a huge job ahead of them ---*a job that looked almost impossible---of rebuilding their destroyed capital-rebuilding the Temple*—but it’s a message of great hope

 He’s telling them - **despite** these difficult times - **despite** the pain you’re presently experiencing in life - despite the **heartaches** you face - **Rejoice in God** - in His plan of salvation!

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St. Paul tells us the same thing in our second reading:

 He says, **Rejoice** always – in all circumstances givethanks.

##  And again, remember who Paul is talking to

 He’s speaking to people who were persecuted for their faith

 He’s writing people who were rejected by society for believing in Jesus - in fact many were **rejected by their families** for being Christians

 And yet, He’s telling them to **rejoice** always! Why?

 Because, as He says in the last line of this reading, “He who calls us is trustworthy, and He will accomplish it”

*And of course God is saying to us today* – “**Rejoice”**

And He says that to us despite the fact that our nation has all kinds of racial tensions- the politics in our country has gotten so ugly—there is so much division in our nation-- in the world –*even in the Church*

And yet in the middle of all the struggles and fears and uncertainties God says to us **“Rejoice”**

My friends this all ties in with last week’s reading.

That we need to look at our lives - at our world -///through the eyes of God for whom a thousand years is like a day and a day like a day like a thousand years.

 Rather than looking at our lives as the world looks at things

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Because to the eyes of the world, a child born in a stable in Bethlehem - is no big deal

Through the eyes of God – **it’s the Incarnation** –*it’s a high point in His plan of salvation*

To the eyes of the world, a man crucified is a wasted life (a life wasted by hatred, envy, cowardice, and indifference)

- To the eyes of God *it’s the Redemption of the world* – it’s the greatest act of Love in human history

To the eyes of the world - death is the greatest loss, a loss that points to the **futility** of life

To the eyes of God - death is the entrance to eternal joy, an event that shows the **immense meaning** of our lives [*the way we live here is going to determine where we live for all eternity*]

To the eyes of the world - suffering, sickness, and heartache ---*are all a complete injustice* - a complete and total waste to be avoided at all costs.

 To the eyes of God - suffering, sickness, and heartache *are the means through which our loving Father leads us to make great leaps of faith*

 Leads us to trust, to hope, to learn how to love, **to learn** to **surrende**r our will and our whole selves into His hands

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And my friends, it’s because Isaiah and St. Paul **looked at life through the eyes of God** that they were able to say to people who were being persecuted- who were hated- who had what appeared to be an impossible task ahead of them (Isaiah) - **Rejoice always**!

 **Rejoice, because God** is faithful - will deliver you - will make all things work out right in the end for those who love Him

The trials, the difficulties, the disappointments, the heartaches we face in this life are temporary - *they won’t last* - they are part of our formation in the ways of love

 And so no matter what we face - we can face things with hope, with confidence - even with joy [not to say emotional pain]

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And we can face **no matter what comes to us** with confidence - because of our faith in Jesus Christ

 Without faith in Jesus - life, with its heartaches, pains, and death - would be pointless. [that’s why so many today live in despair]

Isaiah was pointing to the coming of Jesus - Paul was reflecting on the salvation that Jesus had brought - so they could tell people to Rejoice [and live themselves with joy]

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My friends, I think these readings today call us to do two things

 First, they call us to personally Rejoice

To rejoice in all the circumstances of our lives- no matter what the circumstances are

To rejoice, because Jesus has triumphed- has called us to share in His triumph (*as well as His suffering*) -/// because those who live with faith in Him have eternal joy to look forward too. [heartaches and pain temporary]

But secondly, our readings call us **to share our faith with others** as John the Baptist was doing

 John the Baptist - pointed people to Jesus - to the light of the world

*And he did that because he wanted others to have the joy of salvation—so he proclaimed God’s message of salvation*

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You see my friends, as I pointed out already, to live life without Jesus - is to live life without lasting hope

It’s to live life, without knowing it’s meaning - why we’re here -//// It’s to live life with the heartaches, pains, sufferings, and losses *seeming to be pointless*

There are people all around us who do not have saving faith in Jesus Christ

 Some who have never come to an explicit faith in Jesus

Others, who claim they believe in Jesus, but live as if He never existed or doesn’t matter [believed the lies of satan]

And they need **you** to point them in the direction of the light (John the Baptist)

They need **you to proclaim the truth to them**

 They need **you** to show them the way

 They need **you** to show them that they are here for a reason - that their lives have a purpose - *and that the stakes of how they live and what they believe are high—really really high.*

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My friends, we Catholics have often been **negligent** when it comes to sharing the saving message of Jesus with others

(with a yawn) “Yeah, we have the fullness of faith ... yeah we have Jesus, body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist ... Yeah we have the truth that will set people free ... oh yeah, we have the hope of heaven.” -[Been laxidaisical—and failed to boldly proclaim that truth]

You and I both know people who are Catholic, who speak far more **passionately** about the Browns then they ever spoke of their salvation in Christ.

 [Know Catholics] -far more concerned about the cost of their taxes, {point to cross} *then the cost of their salvation*

 [Know Catholics]- joyfully tell other people about a great new restaurant they found - or a great movie they saw - or a great new consumer product they came across

*But have never told anyone else* - about how great it is to know Jesus - to believe in Jesus –to have a relationship with Jesus- to have the hope of heaven that Jesus gives us

 Who have never told anyone about the privilege of receiving Jesus in Holy Communion - and about the joy of being a part of God’s family

My friends, there are so many people who live without hope - **because they don’t know Jesus**

 If John the Baptist were here - he’d point them to the light

 If Isaiah were here he’d tell them how Jesus is their Savior

 If Paul were here - he’d tell them of the love of God made manifest in the saving work of Jesus

But the fact is, John the Baptist, Isaiah, and Paul aren’t here - *You and I are*

 *Let’s rejoice always in the gift of salvation*

 Let us be excited enough about Jesus to point others to the Light.

**Let’s proclaim** *that truth that will lead people to a sense of real meaning in their lives*