3 Advent C

*“What should we do?”* St Paul says in today’s second reading, *“Don’t worry about anything.”* Really? Anxiety on the rise; Prozac most prescribed. We are told not to worry. And to rejoice always while we’re at it. But St Paul in another letter tells us that by rejoicing we are to mend our ways, to encourage one another, to live in peace, to greet one another with a holy kiss—to love as God loves. Present day extremes. One end is the wild hope in the wonders of God; at the other end are those who are fearful and anxious who defeat God’s plan in their regard.

This is a day of jubilant song and tragedy, and it’s up to us to decide what to be part of. Advent’s waiting and hastening makes us choose, and to see our choices in the perspective of God’s long-standing plan for us—wanting only to love us, to never leave us, and to have a covenant of peace established with us last forever, until all the world knows the mercy of God.

God is faithful, always coming to us, seeking our presence, our worship, our mutual love and our devotion. With steadfast reliance on God’s word and deed, we are to respond, *“I will praise You, Lord, for You have rescued me.”* When we respond, we sing the praises of God together with one heart, one voice. Throughout all of history and throughout all our individual lives, God has been near. We are alive, and in spite of whatever has befallen us, or what we have brought upon ourselves because of sin and infidelities, God always comes close to us. Our lives depend solely on God, in all times and circumstances. This is faith. It is filled with joy even in the midst of great suffering.

To be joyful is an undeniable sign of God’s presence, and of our faith, no matter what transpires as we wait for God to make His glory visible, and to show forth goodness and mercy. The grace of the days of Advent is for the “in-between times,” between the worry and the joy. It’s grace for faith, for enduring gracefully, and for professing with our prayer and the manner of our holy living that God waits for us. Preparing the way for the Lord’s coming among us is to remain joyful, faithful, and attentive for any sign of His approach.

We have heard the words of the prophets. We have heard the words of Jesus. Have we changed? Have we repented? We have been baptized both in water and in the fire of the Holy Spirit. Have we lived remembering the goodness of God shown to us by sharing that kindness, mercy, and remembrance with others caught in pain and trouble? At Mass we pray, *“Let our lives be honest and holy in this present age, as we wait for the happiness to come, and when our great God reveals Himself in glory.”*

How are we waiting? We know what we should do—hang on God’s word, intent on preparing the way of the Lord by walking the highway of holiness. Here is where the action in waiting comes in—the “hastening.” It’s all a matter of what we’re preparing for, the Morning Star to arise in our hearts:

Hark, a thrilling voice is sounding, Christ is nigh it seems to say; Cast away the dreams of darkness, oh ye children of the day!

Wakened by the solemn warning, let the earthbound soul arise; Christ, her Sun, all ill dispelling, shines upon the morning skies.

Lo! The Lamb, so long expected, comes with pardon down from heaven; let us haste, with tears of sorrow, one and all to be forgiven.

That when next He comes with glory, and the world is wrapped in fear; with His mercy He may shield us, and with words of love draw near.

(Words: *Vox clara ecce intonate*, c. 6th century, Ambrosian hymn for Advent, 1849, Edward Caswall)

