

### 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT A



THE GOSPEL [Matthew 11:2-11](#)

*Go and tell John what you hear and see.*

Jesus,  
you make the blind to see.

Help us to see our neighbors' needs.

You open deaf ears to hear.  
Please open our ears  
to hear the cry  
of the poor.

You made  
clean the lepers.  
Clean us too, we beg,  
of the many wrongs we do,  
and the right things we fail to do.

Our mute tongues  
want to sing your praise.  
We want to leap in joy like the stag.

Heal us please.

THE FIRST READING [Isaiah 35:1-6A, 10](#)



*Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak.  
Say to those whose hearts are frightened: be strong, fear not!*

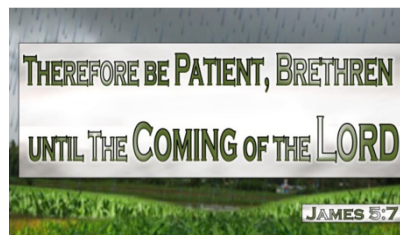
Flee,  
sorrow, grief.  
Be strong, O heart.  
Christ himself labors within us,  
making our knees strong and limbs agile.

Come, joy and gladness. Come to us.  
Make our fields and bogs  
bloom into meadows of flowers.



O God,  
  
we watch for you, and  
count the ways  
you come  
to us.

*THE SECOND READING James 5:7-10*



See  
the farmer awaits  
the precious yield of the soil.

Precious Jesus,  
we await your presence  
every moment of our lives.

Come to us  
bit by bit,  
day by  
day.

Teach us  
to wait for the  
exquisite yield of your  
love.

## REFLECTION: A Healing Messiah?

John the Baptist, sends disciples to ask Jesus if he really is the one they have been expecting.

Apparently, the Baptist had his doubts. Why? John had preached a coming Judgment Day, when the ax would be laid to the root.

**However**, along comes Jesus, telling stories, eating with sinners, and healing. While it is possible that John knew perfectly well that Jesus was the Messiah, it is plausible that the question of Jesus' identity was very much his own.

As is typical of Jesus when confronted with a question, he prompts the questioners to discover the answer for themselves. Rather than giving a simple yes or no, Jesus instructs them to tell John what they see and hear. He proceeds to describe what they are seeing and hearing in words that echo Isaiah. The mention of blind people seeing, lame persons walking and deaf people hearing evokes the very passage used as our [First Reading](#) this Sunday.

In effect, then, Jesus was telling John's disciples: "Look around and see what is happening. These healings of the blind, deaf, and lame that made up so much of the ministries of Jesus and the early Church—were they simply signs to prove the divinity of Jesus and special helps for the infant Christian communities? There is a long tradition of interpretation, which understand the healing portrayed in the New Testament as a normal component of Church life. The Church's requirement of documented healing miracles in the canonization process is an indication that healing beyond medical explanation is a continued expectation in the Church. The ongoing documentation of extraordinary physical healings at Lourdes is another reminder.

My own suspicion is that most common (undocumented) healing occurs when a mother prays for an ailing child. And isn't it true that all of our daily personal encounters are

either a little bit of a healing or a little bit toxic? It is good to remember that the risen Lord we approach and mediate in the sacraments is a healing Messiah. Openness to that reality can be a source of wholeness in our personal and collective lives.

Dennis Hamm, SJ (Edited)

