

Advent
“Upside Down”
Week 3: Acting in Joy

Introduction: In week three of Advent, we consider two themes: *joy* and *action*. Traditionally, the third candle of Advent represents Joy - the joy of Christ’s coming, the joy of promises fulfilled, the joy of future glory in Christ. Our scripture this week does not directly relate to this traditional theme; however, as we read this complicated passage from Luke, we do encounter the incredible proclamation that the Messiah is coming.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, open our minds as we turn to your word. We long to know you, we long to hear you. Search our hearts and examine our thoughts. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior and by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

First time through...consider the following question as the scripture is read aloud:

1. What words or phrases from this passage catch your attention? (write them down/underline them).

Read Luke 3:7-18 and Discuss

Reading: Luke 3:7-18 (NIV)

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **9** The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10 “What should we do then?” the crowd asked. **11** John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” **12** Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” **13** “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

14 Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. **16** John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not

worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” **18** And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

Second time through...consider the following questions as the scripture is read aloud a second time:

1. Who is John the Baptist talking to?
2. What do we know about how the crowd felt after hearing John’s words?

Read Luke 3:7-18 and Discuss

Third time through...consider the following questions as the scripture is read aloud a third and final time.

1. What does this passage say about Jesus? What does it say about the people of God, myself included?
2. Is there any joy or good news that comes from this passage? Explain.

Read Luke 3:7-18 and Discuss

Reflection: John’s words in Luke are hard to hear. We learn from the Old Testament that one of the roles of a prophet was to call God’s people to repentance. This often meant speaking difficult truths. When our sin is exposed and when we see the turmoil around the world, we are acutely aware of our need for a Savior. We, like John, realize that when it comes to Jesus, we are not worthy enough to even untie his sandals. And yet Christ comes to us. This is good news. May our hearts be stirred to joy as we continue to anticipate the future redemption of all of creation through Jesus, our Messiah.

Suggested Prayer “Eternal God, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of your Son. Grant us the wisdom to see your purpose and openness to hear your will, that we too may prepare the way for Christ who is coming in power and glory to establish his kingdom of peace and justice; through Jesus Christ our Judge and our

Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.”-
Book of Common Worship, 175.

