



Luke 3:10-18

10 When all the people asked John, 'What must we do, then?' **11** he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.' **12** There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what must we do?' **13** He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate.' **14** Some soldiers asked him in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!' **15** A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, **16** so John declared before them all, 'I baptize you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandal; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** 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 in a fire that will never go out.' **18** As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

Other readings: Zephaniah 3:14-18 Isaiah 12 Philippians 4:4-7

Luke's gospel gives prominence to John the Baptist as a social reformer. The question 'What must we do then?' resonates through this reading. The answers are of extraordinary relevance to us. We are called upon to share with the hungry and with the needy, to act with justice and to avoid violence.

Luke also stresses the sense of expectation among the people, who even think that John might be the promised Messiah, the Christ. John then speaks about the mission of the Messiah, describing him as 'more powerful'. John is aware of the battle the Messiah will wage against the forces of evil. The baptism he will bring will demand a choice between working for goodness, truth and justice, or working for lesser and contrary aims. Notice that Luke tells us that John preaches 'good news', and refers to the 'many other things' John said to encourage the people.

There is a demanding choice to be made for justice and love, a choice against violence, hatred and selfishness. But the overwhelming atmosphere here is of joyous anticipation of the one who will bring the good news, and who is the good news, the one who will bring healing, forgiveness and new life.

During Advent, and particularly on this Third Sunday of Advent, we sense already the profound joy of the coming of the Saviour.

What demands of justice and non-violence does the gospel bring to me today?

Do I welcome the coming of Christ as good news in the deepest sense?

Pray for those who strive for a just distribution of the world's riches.

Pray for the grace to 'live simply so that others can simply live'.