

Third Sunday of Advent - C 2021
Zephaniah 3.14-18a // Philippians 4.4-7 // Luke 3.10-18

→this past week I came across a website entitle “letters to Santa Claus.....and as you might expect it is a website that has various letters from children to Santa

→letters from children with their list of wants and desires for Christmas....and about how good they had been....and then there were a few of those unique special letters that simply just make you chuckle

→like a letter was from a boy named Max....he wrote: Dear Santa, I have seven things on my list this year and my sister Sarah has eight. I have been good so bring me everything...Sarah has been bad so bring her nothing!

→Toby wrote.....Dear Santa: My brother Tommy wants a bike and my sister Terry wants a doll....I will take everything I can get...and I mean everything.

→and finally...two young brothers got to spend the night with their grandparents right before Christmas.

→at bedtime, the two boys knelt beside their bed to say their prayers ...the older brother began praying at the top of his lungs: *“Dear God, I need a new bicycle for Christmas this year.”*

→after repeating this three or four times, his younger brother leaned over and said... “you don’t have to shout, God isn’t deaf.”

→to which the older brother replied: “no, but Grandma is!”

Our readings today tell us to rejoice, to be glad – even in the midst of extreme suffering and discouragement

→now that might be a tall order given the circumstances of life these days...however as we look towards Christmas it truly is a time for us to rejoice, to be glad.

→and one of the ways we accomplish this is through our expressions of care and concern for one another...

→and perhaps at no other time of year then right now...are those expressions most present and meaningful

→you know one of the more often asked questions at this time of year is... “what do you want for Christmas?”

→...followed by...another common question....“what did you get for Christmas?”

→well in today’s gospel the people are also asking a different but similar question of John the Baptist.....they ask John... “what should we do?”...and... “what ought we be doing?”

→[as we see] the people realized that John was someone special with a special message and so they wanted to know what they should be doing to get ready for the coming of the Messiah...

→the people and tax collectors...and even the soldiers all ask him the same question.... “what should we do?”...to which he gives some pretty bold and startling answers...answers that [I believe] also speak to you and me today as well

→“what should we be doing” they ask...and he answers by saying.... **“be satisfied with your wages”**

→now.....that's a pretty strange answer when you think about it...but you see...in those days...there weren't unions or pensions or insurance, there weren't banks or interest or labor agreements

→in those days...*people's worth was measured by what they did for each other rather than by what they had.....*

→today it is just the opposite...[today] we unfortunately measure the worth of people by what they have rather than by what they do

→i.o.w....we evaluate people's worth today by how many millions they have or are making... rather than by what they are doing for others

→and so, I think John's message to us today is basically this... "be content with what you have"

→...we are all living pretty comfortable lives when you think about it...with a roof over our head, clothes on our backs and food on our tables...and yet how often is there that strong desire to want more...

→and it is **to that** strong desire...that John is speaks to us today

→i.o.w...perhaps the real Christmas challenge is for us to focus on what we have rather than on what we are going to get...or what we want

→next they ask.... "what should we be doing?" ... and John answers by saying...
"do not practice extortion or accuse anyone falsely"

→...i.o.w. don't be a bully

→back then bullies carried sticks and small knives, maybe swords and spears.....today we still have weapons but we also have words and attitudes, thoughts and motives...the weapons may have changed but the idea remains the same

→what I think John is saying to you and me today...is that we shouldn't bully anyone with our words or attitudes

→often and without realizing it we can overpower one another emotionally and spiritually and mentally...we often violate others by our gossip and anger, our jealousy and greed...

→and so perhaps that is John message for us...when he says do not practice extortion...i.o.w. don't take advantage of others

→and finally...what should we be doing" they ask...and John answers...
"share your coats...share what you have with those who are in need"

→in essence, John's answer is the root of the Christian way of life...it is a task and challenge that all of us are continually called to...to take care and watch out for others.

PAUSE

→[and so] what ***should*** we be doing...well if John the Baptist were standing here today...perhaps he would say

→we should be waiting together for the time of Christ

→we should reconcile with those to whom we have been estranged

→we should be patient to those to whom we have been abrupt

→give understanding to those to whom we have been confused

→and embrace God's mercy and share it with one another....

PAUSE

→so....what do you want for Christmas....

...and a few day after...that question will change to “what did you get for Christmas?”

→wouldn't it be nice if the answer to both this year...were the exactly the same..... “I want and got the love of Christ for Christmas this year and shared it with others”

I want and got.....a heart full of hope and joy and peace.....