

St. Peter's Lessons and Discussion Questions
Advent Three, December 13, 2020

Below are our lessons for Sunday as well as questions for you to ponder before we gather for Coffee Hour. Even though each of you will be discussing **only one** of the questions, my hope is that by providing you with all of the lessons and questions our time of sharing will be enhanced.

Old Testament

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
spring up before all the nations. to

Psalm 126

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, *
then were we like those who dream.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, *
and our tongue with shouts of joy.
3 Then they said among the nations, *
"The Lord has done great things for them."
4 The Lord has done great things for us, *
and we are glad indeed.
5 Restore our fortunes, O Lord, *
like the watercourses of the Negev.
6 Those who sowed with tears *
will reap with songs of joy.
7 Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, *
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

The Epistle

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The Gospel

John 1:6-8,19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Group Discussion Questions for Coffee Hour (12/13)

Today's gospel lesson is about end time events. Other readings emphasize the importance of learning to trust in God. Please review these questions in preparation for our time together.

Group 1. In our Gospel lesson for today John is said to have come "as a witness to testify to the light..." Do you believe that Christians are called to testify to the light? How can we do this in our current circumstances?

Group 2. John the baptizer seems to be clear on both his mission and purpose as one "sent by God." Do you feel/believe that being "sent by God" is a current reality? If yes, please give an example.

Group 3. When Paul wrote Thessalonians, that church was grieving the deaths of some members. What do you see in the closing verses of this New Testament epistle that would give us reason for hope? How has God been faithful -- even in this pandemic?

Group 4. In ***Thessalonians** Paul instructs the church to "... test the words of the prophets." What do you think this meant? How can we "test" what we hear when we are told by those who say that God is leading?

Group 5. In John's gospel the witnessing that John does has the purpose of leading hearers to a relationship with God. Do you feel equipped to witness with this hope in mind?

Group 6. In our lesson for today the prophet ***Isaiah** lets us know what the LORD's anointed will do. Do these words give you reason to hope? Why do you believe Jesus quoted this text in a synagogue in Nazareth of Galilee?

***These lessons will be placed in the chat.**