

Advent Reading for Monday, December 11, 2017
“The Needy will Rejoice in the Lord”
(Isaiah 29:18-19)

Isaiah’s prophetic descriptions of the Messiah describe many facets of His ministry. The one we are considering today focuses on His compassionate miracles toward those who were afflicted with overwhelming needs: *“On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. The afflicted also will increase their gladness in the Lord, and the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel”* (29:18-19). Isaiah later returns to this theme: *“Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy”* (35:5-6).

When we turn to the New Testament, we see Jesus doing exactly what Isaiah had foretold: *“Jesus was going throughout all Galilee...healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people”* (Matthew 4:21). Those who were healed obviously benefited, but Jesus’ miracles were also signs, pointing to His identity as the Messiah and Son of God.

For the specific fulfillment of today’s prophecy, however, it was Jesus Himself who quoted Isaiah’s words. It was in response to a question from John the Baptist when he was imprisoned and somewhat bewildered. John sent some of his loyal followers to Jesus with the question: *“Are You the One who was to come, or should we look for another?”* Jesus’ response was surprisingly simple: *“Go and report to John what you hear and see: THE BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT AND THE LAME WALK, THE LEPROUS ARE CLEANSSED AND THE DEAF HEAR, THE DEAD ARE RAISED, AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.”* (Matthew 11:4-5) Jesus’ answer included today’s prophecy and two others from Isaiah.

Like many Jews who heard Jesus, John was confused about Jesus’ agenda, and understandably so. In writing of Jesus’ first Advent, the prophets also referenced His second coming, often in the same utterance. Jesus reassured John by affirming that His current ministry of healing had been foretold by the prophets.

Jesus' words to John the Baptist contain a great lesson for us during times when we are confused and tempted to waver in our faith. If we can go to the promises of God's Word we know to be true, they can serve as anchors to keep us secure until our confusing questions are answered.

Another lesson is also clear: while we may not be blind, deaf, lame, or mute like those Jesus healed, our spiritual need is actually greater. We are internally corrupt sinners, dead in our trespasses and sins, unable to change our depraved condition. The hopeful truth in Isaiah's prophecy is that "*the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel*". Thankfully, this includes us. While Jesus is *the Holy One of Israel*, He is also the Savior in whom we, as *the needy of mankind*, also rejoice! Before the rejoicing can begin, however, we must confess our sins and turn to Him in repentance, humility and faith. In His love and grace, *the only Holy One*, gave Himself on the cross to meet our greatest need, paying in full the eternal penalty for our sins!

**Giving Thanks – Thank You for the compassionate healings
You performed long ago for the needy, but thank You also for
the healing, forgiveness, and life You give today to all who
believe!**