

Gaudete!

Rejoice!

This is the theme of our readings today

But we see in our readings a bit of a paradox

Our first reading gave us a glimpse of our destination

But our Gospel told of John the Baptist in prison

But at its core, the message is the same

Rejoice!

Isaiah looks at 2 ways God's promises will be fulfilled

The physical realm in nature

The desert will bloom

The wilderness will be filled with new life

But human beings will also be restored

Those who have been broken down by life will be healed

The eyes of the blind will be opened

The deaf will hear

The ears of the deaf will hear

The lame will leap like a stag

The exiled will return to Zion

Christ's second coming will redeem all of creation

The natural world that inflicts so much harm through floods and droughts

Fire

Earthquakes, hurricanes and tornados

And human nature will be restored as well

The physical and spiritual will be healed

Sin brought deformity into our world

Christ will drive sin from the world

And all God's creation will be restored

Then we have the paradox of Christ's appearance on the earth

Why did not all these things occur in their entirety?

John is in prison

And he will die in prison

So he sends his disciples to Christ

Are you the One? Or do we look for another?

Jesus does not give a simple yes or no answer

Go and report to John what you see

The blind regain their sight

The deaf hear

Lepers are cleansed

Jesus wants them to experience an awakening of faith

He teaches that it is about more than individual cures
But blindness, leprosy, lameness, deafness
Even death itself have been defeated in him
These things point to the kind of messiah Jesus would be
And they pointed to what he was not
Many were expecting a political or military messiah
One who would free Israel from the Roman army
Jesus made it clear that he was not this kind of a messiah
Then the disciples of John leave
And Jesus changes the topic of conversation
Who did you come out to see?
A reed swaying in the wind?
Or a man of firm purpose?
A man dressed in fine garments?
Eating rich foods?
Or a man of simple clothing
With a simple diet of locusts and honey
Did you go to see a prophet?
And they saw more than just a prophet
They saw the one sent as the messenger of God
To prepare the way of the Lord
John points to the new age

Yet, despite being the greatest ever born of a woman

He would not enter the new age

Only point to the way

Pointing to Christ

It is Christ who leads us to new life

From a desert to a garden

From weakness to strength

He turns the things of this world on their head

All his promises will be fulfilled

In the fullness of time

We are called to wait for these things with patience

As St James said in our second reading

Like a farmer who had prepared the soil

Planted seed in the springtime

Working hard all along

And at the same time waiting patiently

For the maturing of the crop

For the harvest

We fulfill our duties and responsibilities

Regardless of how demanding

Regardless of how successful they might be in human terms

Regardless of any failure

We are called to be faithful

The greatest joys in this world

Success in business

Marriage and family

Children

Health

The greatest sorrows

Death of a loved one

Loss of our jobs

Crop failure

Serious illness

We are called to be patient

Walking through these things with Christ

Not allowing them to replace him in our lives

But to point us to him

And to rejoice

Not for any worldly reward

But for that eternal reward promised by a God who is faithful

A promise that is fulfilled with the birth of a little child