

follow Jesus, or if John was actually the one having doubts. The people in the Old Testament had doubts. Isaiah was able to make the promise of better times. John was in prison and Jesus didn't seem to be doing anything for him. Perhaps John wanted to see the fulfilment of the prophecy that said the prisoners would be released. Suffice it to say that Jesus pointed to Isaiah and presented Himself as the fulfilment of the prophecy; the One to come. Jesus had nice things to say about John but better things to say about those who would follow Him. The Love of God has come to us in human form. We can without any doubt follow Him.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

© O God, our Father, in this most sacred hour we, Your children, bring our prayers and supplications with thanksgiving. Send us, according to what each of us needs, the blessing of deliverance and renewal for our body and soul. Forgive our sin, remove our temptation. If we are blind in spirit open our eyes. If we walk in uncertainty, guide our path. If we have impure thoughts, words or deeds cleanse us by Your Spirit. If we are deaf to You, open our ears to Your Word of truth. If we are dead to salvation, quicken us by Your mighty power.

Let Your Holy Spirit descend on us, we pray, that we may not fail in that day when our Lord comes again as the light of the world, showing forth the hidden sin and proclaiming the evil of our heart. Wash us and make us clean that in that day we would be found without sin, and with our names printed in the Book of Eternal Life (our Savior Jesus Christ.)

We pray for Your Church throughout the world. Grant Your blessing on all Your servants who proclaim Your Word to the world. Give aid and strength to all missionaries and through them imbue Your Word with power, that all men may know You to be the only true God and Savior of all mankind. Rule over the hearts of the world, guide the decisions of those in authority, and sit in the secret councils of nations, to the end that peace and justice will prevail.

Bless all who are gathered before You this day. Be with those of our number who are sick or under any affliction of body, mind, or spirit, comfort them that they may, through their trials, learn of Your gracious power and readiness to help in time of every need. Keep us by Your power that where ever we go and whatever we do it is with Your Word on our hearts and Your praise on our lips.

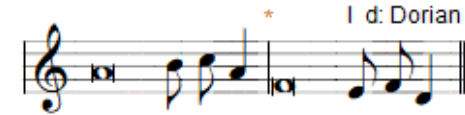
Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. (Time of silent prayer.)

Endow us with Your grace to show forth the Love of Christ, in Whose name we pray.

© Amen.

ADVENT THREE

Chant Tone



<p><b>Introit</b></p> <p>Rejoice in the Lord — always;* again I will   say, Rejoice.</p> <p>I will hope con   tinually* and will praise You yet   more and more.</p> <p>My mouth will tell of Your righteous acts, of Your deeds of salvation   all the day.* for their number is past my — knowledge.</p> <p>With mighty deeds of the Lord God   I will come;* I will remind them of Your righteousness,   Yours alone.</p>	<p>O God, from my youth You have — taught me,* and I still proclaim Your   wondrous deeds.</p> <p>So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not for — sake me.* until I proclaim Your might to another generation, Your power to all   those to come.</p> <p>Glory be to the Father and   to the Son* and to the Holy — Spirit; as it was in the be — ginning,* is now, and will be forever. — Amen.</p> <p>Rejoice in the Lord — always;* again I will   say, Rejoice.</p> <p><i>(Antiphon, Philippians 4:4; Psalm 71:14-18)</i></p>
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Collect of the Day

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Gradual

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of — Zion!\*

Shout aloud, O daughter of Je | rusalem!

Behold, your King is com | ing to you,\*  
righteous and having salva | tion is He.

Blessèd is he who comes in the name | of the Lord.\*

We bless you from the house | of the Lord.

*(Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26 alternative)*

**ENTRANCE PRAYER:** We praise You, O God; we acknowledge You to be the Lord. Heaven is Your throne and Earth Your footstool. From the beginning of creation to the present, You have shown Your concern for the welfare of the human race. In times of trouble You have rescued us; in times of joy You have increased our happiness. For Your steadfast love, O Lord accept our heartfelt thanks. Strengthen our sense of good judgment and use us to bring the good tidings to the people of the world. Hasten the day of universal peace promised at the Second Coming. This we ask in the name that is above every other name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

**JOHN APPEARED IN THE JORDAN, PREACHING REPENTANCE, AND MANY WERE DRAWN TO HIM.** These were the people living in anticipation of the fulfillment of Scripture. Some among them doubted. It has been, debated since the very day John sent his disciples to Jesus, if John was also having doubts. There are arguments to support either side and it isn't completely clear. What is completely clear is that John was a prophet. The work of John The Baptist was to point to the Christ, declare His Day—the Day of the Lord—and then go off into obscurity. As John decreased our salvation increased. John did his appointed (or pointing) task and we were properly introduced to our Savior. We welcome all who worship with us today. Through the work of John (and all the other prophets and evangelists) we have been introduced to Jesus Christ for our Salvation and through Him introduced to our Father for our eternity.

**THEME OF THE DAY:**

Messianic Proofs

**INTROIT**—(Antiphon: Philippians 4:4;) Psalm 71:14-18

Philippians 4 was written during the time Paul was a prisoner being constantly watched by a jailer. Sometimes he was chained to his captors. Still, he proclaimed that we should rejoice in the Lord, with a special emphasis on, "always," and then repeated the exhortation. Psalm 71:14-18 is the praise section of this Psalm. We recognize that we can't name or number the grace and goodness showered down on us day by day. We thank God that He has kept us in His promise from the days of our youth and that He will continue to keep us even as we age.

**COLLECT**

In 2006 we dropped the traditional prayer (that mentioned John the Baptist,) now we pray that our hearts are enlightened by the celebration of the birth of our Savior.

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**—Isaiah 35:1-10

These are called the: "Oracles of Hope" and connect to chapter 34. There is a promise of a future reversal of the negative events happening to the people. The 10 Northern Tribes were taken into captivity, and all anyone could imagine was dry ground. The Love of God was still with His people. The prophecy of assurance was always two sided. It came true in the return of the people to Jerusalem under Ezra, while the true fulfillment was when the Messiah came to the temple. Isaiah spoke of that fulfillment when he said, "He will come to save you."

**GRADUAL**—Zechariah 9:9, Psalm 118:26 alternative

Our trust is in the return of our King, the Lord. The Old Testament people put their trust in the prophecy of Zechariah. 9:9. We put this verse in our Gradual, to remind us of the Palm Sunday event, Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Psalm 118 is an unidentified song of praise. It is sung in anticipation of the coming Savior.

**EPISTLE LESSON**—James 5:7-11

The Lord is near. From the perspective of James we need to put on a God pleasing attitude and activity. The attitude is not to grumble and to stand firm. James always seemed to speak in the negative. If we turn around everything he said, we get the understanding that as the time of the Lord draws near, we need to especially love our neighbors as we do ourselves.

**GOSPEL LESSON**—Matthew 11:2-15

John the Baptist gave an explanation of Jesus to all who would listen. John spoke wonderful words about the Savior, and Jesus in turn said wonderful things about John. It isn't clear if John sent the disciples to get them to