3 Homily for the Third Sunday of Advent Year A

11 December 2916

Is 35:1-6, 10; James 5:7-10; Mt 11:2-11

Any reader of the Gospel passage today is often puzzled by its story. How is it that John came to wonder whether Jesus was the Coming One from his prison cell? After all, John had already greeted Jesus as the Coming One ([Mt 3:14](http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/3%3A14)). Why this hesitation? Was he perhaps having second thoughts now? Or had Jesus turned out to be a different kind of Messiah from the one John had expected—one meek and lowly of heart rather than one who purged the threshing floor with the winnowing fan of impending judgment?

Dear friends, the real question is the one addressed to us: Can we believe that he is the Coming One or must we look for another? In answer to John’s question—which is our question, too—Jesus does not give a straight yes or straight no. Neither does he tell people to pray more or go to the synagogue or make God the centre of their lives. The age of the messiah does not concern “religion” in the traditional sense of the word. In fact his answer is not in words but in deeds. He points to what is happening in his ministry: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are made clean etc. He does not say thathe is healing the blind. The language is in the passive form. The blind are given their sight by God. Thus Jesus indirectly affirms that his miracles are works of God wrought through him. But he never says so directly. The hearer has to work this out for himself or herself and to make a decision of faith.

The miracles of Jesus are not proofs, but signs. Signs on the road must direct us to a reality. The sign is not the reality. Likewise, the miracles of Jesus are signs but not signs of Jesus’ divinity. They are signs that God is present and at work in Jesus; it is the redemptive joy that wells up in the hearts of the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers and the poor and the dead who have come back to life —signs for those who have eyes of faith to see and ears of faith to hear.

So what Jesus did is a sign and the extension of the perfect society found in transcendent realm, this is the Messianic hope. This hope is not “all will be well” type of optimism. But it is in accepting our human limitedness and trusting that perfect order and peace will be found in Christ and in his Kingdom. So whatever we do to alleviate suffering pain and to bring joy and peace to the lives of others is a Messianic action; an action that tells that God is present and at work in you and points to the Messianic hope, the perfect ordering of things beyond this realm.