

**The Still Point**  
**A Time of Meditation and Reflection**  
**Second Sunday of Advent**

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;  
**Peace on each one who comes in joy.**  
Peace on each one who offers prayers;  
**Peace on each one who offers song.**  
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,  
**Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.**

**Opening Prayer**

Come, O come Emmanuel,  
you are the way, the truth and the life;  
Come, living Savior  
come to your world which waits for you.  
Hear this prayer for your love's sake.  
**Amen.**

**The Gospel**

*Matthew 11:2-11*

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' "Truly I tell you, among those born

of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

**Poem:** “Joy of the Redeemed”

*Isaiah 35:3-7*

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
"Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

### **Meditation**

The gospel passage shows us a poignant moment in the usually fiery story of John the Baptist. Imprisoned for speaking truth to power, surely knowing that his death is approaching, John sends word to Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Why does John doubt, when earlier he had so confidently proclaimed Jesus as God’s Messiah, the Holy One coming into our midst? Perhaps it is because even for John, the last and greatest prophet of the coming Holy One, the actions of Jesus defy expectation. John had announced, “his winnowing fork is in his hand!” But what he hears instead is that the deeds of power of the long expected Messiah are works of healing and justice.

The poetry of the prophet Isaiah is some of the grandest in scripture and beyond. In magnificent, rolling cadences, he lays out a vision of the renewal of all things at the coming of the Holy One into our midst. The prophet’s vision combines the powerful vengeance of the God who delivers the people, and the healing mercy of the God who mends all harms, among people and all nature.

While John may have been expecting a fulfillment of the promise of God’s vengeance in the coming of the Holy One, Jesus lives into the promise of healing and renewal. And so even John, his prophet, wonders, “Are you the One who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”

## **Questions for Reflection**

Who are the prophets – ancient or contemporary – who matter to you?

Have you seen signs – small, perhaps – of the healing and renewal promised in the prophets?

If you encountered the Jesus we see in this passage, what would you ask him to heal or make new?

## **Prayers**

We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today

We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer

We bring to God a troubled situation in our world

We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. **Amen.**

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

***Poem and Reflection offered by: Rev'd Elizabeth Randall***