**Jesu Juva**

“Yes! He Is the One”  
Text: Matthew 11:2-15; Isaiah 35:1-10;  
James 5:7-11; Philippians 4:4 (Introit)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour  
Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?**

The Jewish leaders said no. You, Jesus, are not the one. The Romans said no. We have  
our own gods. Philosophers and scientists through the ages have said no. We have our  
own answers to the questions of life and death. But for twenty centuries now, the Church  
has answered yes! Jesus is the one. Jesus is the one who was, who is, and who is to come.  
The eternal God. The promised Saviour. Come to save us.

And the Church has taken this message into the world. To the Jew, the Greek, and the  
Romans. To the people of the North. She went to the cultures of the East and the people  
of Africa. With just this message. One message for all peoples of every age.  
Unchangeable, as He is unchanging.

The world changes though. Races come and go, people come to life and people die.  
Philosophies change, worldviews change, new religions arise, science makes new  
discoveries. And it seems like change is happening now more rapidly than ever before.  
But the message of the Church is always the same. Jesus is the one. He came and is  
coming again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and whose kingdom will have no  
end. Some scoff at that message, some accept it, but that is the message.

**Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?**

This is a question that you, too, must reckon with, must answer. It is a matter of life and  
death. How you will live now and die now, and whether you will live forever.

It is the question asked in the Holy Gospel today by, perhaps, a most unexpected man:  
John the Baptist. John, the great forerunner of the Christ. John, who baptized the Christ.  
John, who saw the heavens opened, a dove descend upon Jesus, and heard a voice from  
heaven proclaim: *This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased* (Matthew 3:17). So .  
. . is John now wavering? Second guessing? Doubting?
If so, we could understand that. We waver, second-guess, and doubt for a lot less in our lives than the prison John was languishing in. Or perhaps John was asking this question for the benefit of his disciples - so they would know and not doubt. Or maybe it was for both them and him. He does ask, after all, shall WE look for another? Are you the one . . ?

And who else is asking that very question today? Surely many people. A homeless person crying for help. A struggling single mother. The mourner who just lost a loved one. The cry of the one in prison. The wounded soldier suffering from PTSD. The elderly in a nursing home. The lonely in a barren and empty home. The child suffering the physical and emotional scars of abuse. The spouse whose marriage is falling apart. The addict losing his fight against his addiction. And who else? Who would you add to this list? People and places the church needs to go today? And where are you in it?

Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?

This is an important question. And not just the question of Advent, but the question of our lives. The question of life and death.

Jesus answers with the words of Isaiah the prophet: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. These were the signs, according to Isaiah, that God had come to save. They weren’t the saving, but the signs. That God had come with vengeance and recompense - or in other words, payback. To afflict what afflicts us. To ravage what ravages us. To slay what slays us. The overcome the sin and death in us and in the world.

And so it must be. For where God is, there is life. And so in Jesus, life is breaking into this world of sin and death. A new world is beginning . . . but is not yet.


But if all we’re looking for are the answers to the problems of the world now, science will do. If all we’re looking for is how we can make things right among us, perhaps some philosophy can do that. If all we’re looking for is wisdom and answers to what we want to know, there are lots of teachers and wise men in this world to turn to. If all we’re looking for is peace, then we’ll just try to coexist and not offend anyone.

But if you’re looking for life, real life, a new life, a life not in the things of this world but a life that transcends them, and the hope of a life that continues through death, there’s one only who can do that. Who came to do that. And who did that. Who, as Isaiah said, ransomed us from all that is afflicting us and holding us captive.
Now, that word *ransom* . . . whenever I hear that word I think of dramas I’ve seen on TV where someone is kidnapped or held captive and a ransom is demanded to get them back. The person being held hostage is scared and frightened and maybe even being knocked around a bit. And sometimes, one hostage is exchanged for another; a substitute goes in and the captive is set free.

*Are you the one, Jesus, who is coming to do this for us, or shall we look for another?*

The answer to that question is ultimately given us on the cross. For there we see our substitute. There we see the Son of God exchanged for us. To become captive for the captives. He is knocked around *more* than a bit - He is crushed with our sin and death, and we are set free. What Jesus did before this, with the blind, the deaf, the lame, the leper, the dead, and the poor - all were signs of this that He had come to do. They weren’t the saving, the rescuing. They were smaller *freedoms* to point to the greater *ransom* He had come to pay. With Himself. His own born of a virgin, laid in a manger, flesh and blood.

Sometimes, all we are looking for, though, are the smaller freedoms, the smaller gifts. The things we can see. The things that we want here and now. But Jesus has come to provide the greater. A good life now, a Merry Christmas, is not enough for Him. If that is all you want, Jesus is not the one. Look for another.

*But if you want more than that* . . . something greater, there is no other who can give that to you. In this world, there is a ceiling. There is only so high you can climb, so much you can have; you can only be so great. And *among those born of women* - that is to say, all of us! - *there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist,* Jesus said. That’s your ceiling. He is the greatest. And *he is in prison.*

But the one who is born again, *born from above* - that is to say, all who are baptized! - *is* greater. For you there is no ceiling. For *the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John*; is greater than any greatness we see or can have in this world. For Jesus traded His life for yours, which makes you pretty valuable and great. Greater than any great you could ever achieve.

And that *is* yours now. You are a citizen of heaven now. But traveling still. On a pilgrimage. You’re traveling in a world with war, with great and grievous sin, with prison, impeachment, with hatred and violence. A world that is often harsh, frequently unfair, and not easy to live in. But though *in* this world, you are not *of* this world. Your baptism is your passport. That is who you truly are. A citizen a heaven. A child of God.

For God judges great very differently than we do. This we must learn. And when we know the great of heaven and not just the great of this world, *then* there is joy. The joy of
sins forgiven. The joy that death is not the end of a short and sorry life. Joy in good times and difficult times. The kind of joy Isaiah described. Joy that not just people have, but all of creation has. Because of the coming one. Who comes into this world of death with His life. This world of sin with His forgiveness. This world of darkness with His light. This world of sadness with His joy. And He says: for you. Take, eat, and drink. Hark the Glad Sound! (LSB #349) Be washed. Fear not.

That is our joy this day. And so we lit the rose-colored candle on the Advent Wreath - the joy candle. To remind us that the answer to John’s question - Are you the coming one? - is a resounding, yes! And He is our coming one. Coming again, in glory, when our pilgrimage ends.

But even now He comes. For, Jesus’ brother James tells us, the coming of the Lord is at hand. Near. As near as the preaching that hits your ears, the water that splashes on your head, and the bread and wine placed into your mouth. Hidden, here and now, as He was in the days of John. But the signs were there. And the signs are here. And He is coming soon.

Until then, James says, be patient. There is growing still to do. The Word is still at work, in you and in the world. Establish your hearts in Him, in His Word. Deep roots in His Word, so that the storms of life cannot uproot you. Do not be offended by Jesus, or embarassed by Him. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice. Not because your life is easy or you have what you want now, but because your Lord rejoices in you. And is coming for you. See Him in the manger, on the cross, and here (altar). Look for no other.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.