

THIRD SUNDAY ADVENT [A]

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

I sure don't like it when I'm feeling gloomy and unhappy. For sure, it is not that I wake up with the intention of going through my day gloomy and unhappy. Nevertheless, these feelings do occur and when I allow them to overwhelm me the challenges can be formidable.

For example, a *gloomy* and *unhappy* soul is at the mercy of many fierce temptations. Indeed, how many sins have been committed in the shadow of *gloominess and unhappiness!*

When the soul is dejected it spreads its misery and harms others.

What, then, makes for a gloomy and unhappy soul? The soul becomes gloomy and unhappy when:

- I am at the center of it all
- I think about myself to the exclusion of others
- I am indifferent and lazy in my duties and responsibilities – think about your family and your work
- I forgo small sacrifices and instead seek small self-indulgences
- I am careless in my relationship with God

Friends, unless we earnestly are trying to forget ourselves, we will not be able to know and serve Christ, in Whom alone is found true and lasting happiness.

Our own experiences validate that excessive self-centeredness makes it very, very difficult to discover the deep and permanent joy we want so dearly to find.

Now everyone can make life less miserable and more pleasant for others by living more *generously*. When we live more for God and others and less for our selves, we also stand to find the fullness of joy we are seeking.

And what happens when the soul is happy? Well, a happy soul spreads its happiness to others, encourages others and helps others.

We can make life more pleasant for other people in little ways which show that we genuinely care about them:

- Smile
- Say something nice
- Offer an encouraging and supportive word
- Don't make a fuss over unimportant things that are better overlooked and forgotten

Just by these small actions we help to make life easier for the people around us.

An important part of our Christian mission is to bring happiness to a world which increasingly is sad at heart because it is drifting further and further away from God.

As a kid I fondly remember trying to follow some small streams back to their source. In my memory they were daring adventures that I also recall got me into some trouble with my parents for ruined shoes and late returns home.

What is the source of human happiness – real, lasting happiness?

When we embark on this daring adventure, we discover that the source of all human happiness is Christ the Lord.

Friends, this holy season let's dare to give witness to Christ the Lord by our genuine happiness – that is, by seeking to live lives pleasing to God and drawing nearer to Him.

Gloominess and unhappiness happen when Christ is lost.

Happiness builds as we draw nearer to Jesus.

Yes, it is that simple.

This holy season join with me to dispel gloominess and unhappiness wherever we are by doing all we can in small ways to notice and help those around us – being polite and courteous and kind and helpful and grateful.

These days, many people need to be convinced that Christ really has been born in Bethlehem.

And, really, what possibly is more convincing that Christ really has been born in Bethlehem than the happiness of those who are His followers?