

3rd Sunday of Advent - RESCUED

First Reading - Isaiah 35:1-6a,10

Psalm - Psalm 146:6-10

Second Reading - James 5:7-10

Gospel - Matthew 11:2-11

So, the past two weeks the homily looked little sober. I felt in the same way. Now this week we can all smile because we get to hear the good news. The good news is that Jesus came to RESCUE us and the world. In order to understand this aspect better, I want to ask three simple questions this week. It will help us understand better The Rescued.

- Why did Jesus come?
- What was Jesus doing on the Cross
- What difference does it make?

1. Why Did Jesus Come?

Why did God enter into his creation and land as a man? The answer is the same, God became man to fight, to go to war, to liberate an oppressed race, and to free prisoners.

We can find this answer from scripture at the beginning of His ministry,

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me

Because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

And recovering of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty who are oppressed,

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”, Luke 4, 18-19.

And HE goes little further, Jesus tells the crowd,

“Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” Luke 4,21.

Jesus is talking about the Captives, blind and oppressed that includes men and women that’s you and me. We have the good news of being Rescued.

Mark gives a slightly different approach. In the beginning, Jesus’ ministry according to Mark goes like this with a conversation between Jesus and

demon possessed man in the synagogue of Capernaum, the demon cries out,

“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us” Mark 1, 24

In this passage, we don't see a massive struggle between Jesus and demon. In fact, Jesus simply addresses the demon and says “Be silent” Mark 1, 25

2. What was Jesus doing on the Cross?

Before you read this next section, find a crucifix, and take a few moments to look at Jesus there. As you do, ask yourself these questions: "Does this look like a warrior? Is Jesus on the cross the hunted? Or is he the hunter? Is he the victim or is he the aggressor?"

At first glance, the answers to these questions seem obvious. A man is nailed on a cross. He's crowned with thorns, his body streaked with his own blood from the terrible scourging he has endured.

He has a gaping wound in his side. Crucifixion, deliberately done in the middle of a major intersection so that everyone would see it, was the ancient world's most humiliating and degrading way to kill someone.

Everyone was invited to this free-for-all public spectacle, and it was a warning from the Romans: "This will happen to you if you dare mess with us."

And despite the design of those crucifixes in our churches the man on the cross was naked. clearly, on the cross, Jesus looks like the hunted, the victim, and anything but a warrior. But remember who Jesus is. This isn't merely a man; this is God made man.

This is the One through whom and for whom everything that is seen and unseen was created. Jesus says shortly before he enters into his Passion,

"No one takes [my life] from me" (John10:18),. Just a little later, he goes on to say,

"The ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me" (John14:30,). In short, there's only one way that God can be nailed to a cross: he has to want it to happen. But why?

There are three ways of answering that question. The three explanations for what Jesus is doing on the cross are:

- Jesus is showing us the love of the Father
- Jesus is making atonement for us
- Jesus is going to war to rescue us.

3. What difference does it make?

So now what? What difference does it make in any of our lives? It changes everything!

By his death and glorious resurrection from the dead Jesus has

- humiliated the enemy,
- destroyed death,
- transferred us,
- given us access to the Father,
- recreated us, Confession
- rendered sin impotent,
- given us authority over the enemy, and
- sent us on a mission to get his world back.

Jesus did this because you and I matter to God. God doesn't need me or you. He's not bored. He's infinitely happy. And yet he not only loves us, but thirsts for us.