

We all live with questions. Some of them are small and practical, but others run much deeper—questions about suffering, about unanswered prayers, about whether God is really at work when life seems to be moving backward rather than forward. Advent is a season that takes those questions seriously. It does not silence them. Instead, it teaches us how to wait with faith while the answers unfold in God's time.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist asks one of the most honest questions in all of Scripture: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Last week we heard John proclaim a baptism of repentance, and a Messiah whose kingdom would usher in fire and judgment. Jesus appears instead as a healer, a companion of the poor, a bearer of mercy. What he hears of Jesus from prison does not match his vision of the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one. And so his question reveals something profoundly human. Faith does not eliminate questions; it gives us the courage to ask them.

Notice how Jesus responds. He does not answer John's disciples with a simple "yes." Instead, he reveals the fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah: "Go and tell John what you hear and see." The blind see. The lame walk. The deaf hear. The poor have good news proclaimed to them. Jesus points directly to the Servant Songs of Isaiah—the very promises we hear in today's first reading. Weak hands are strengthened. Fear gives way to hope. Jesus is revealing that the Messiah has come, but not in the way

many expected. Before God judges the world, he heals it. Before he condemns sin, he carries it. The glory of God is revealed not first in power, but in restored human life.

This is where patience enters the heart of faith. Saint James urges us today: “Be patient... until the coming of the Lord.” Christian patience is not passive waiting. It requires strengthened hearts, a deep trust that God is at work even when growth is hidden. Like the farmer who waits for early and late rains, we are called to remain rooted, resisting the temptation to hurry God or force outcomes. Mary herself models this patience. A pregnant woman cannot hasten birth, and neither can the Church rush God’s saving plan. Advent reminds us that waiting is not wasted time; it is the place where faith matures.

John the Baptist’s greatness lies precisely here. Jesus praises him not because he never questions, but because he remains united to Jesus wherever Jesus is—whether in the womb as he leapt for joy in the presence of Jesus in Mary’s womb, in the desert as he sensed the coming of the Lamb of God, or now, in prison as he senses again the presence of God but can’t quite reconcile it with who he thought the Messiah would be. John stays connected even when understanding fails. He does not withdraw into bitterness or indifference. He sends his disciples to Jesus. In doing so, he shows us that faith is sustained not by certainty, but by continually drawing near to God.

This Gospel challenges us to examine our own expectations of God. Part of our Advent preparation is asking whether we have allowed our assumptions—about how God should act, when God should intervene, what salvation should look like—to blind us to what God is actually doing. Jesus warns us gently: “Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.” Blessed is the one who does not stumble because God’s mercy unfolds more quietly, more slowly, and more vulnerably than we imagined. God does not come at Christmas in might, but on a quiet night as a baby in the manger.

Jesus tells John’s disciples to look not at spectacular moments, but at His ministry to the suffering. That is where his identity is most clearly revealed. And it is often the same in our lives. We come to know Jesus not only in moments of joy and clarity, but in suffering, confusion, and waiting—when we have more questions than answers. In those moments, Christ is healing something deeper than the circumstances in our lives: he is healing our faith.

Advent does not ask us to resolve all our questions before Christmas arrives. It asks us to remain rooted in Christ, like branches on the vine, trusting that his presence is already at work within us. Even now, the desert is beginning to bloom. Even now, the Lord is near. And if we are patient, if we keep our hearts firm, we may discover that the Messiah we are waiting for is already walking with us—quietly restoring, gently saving, and making us fully alive.