

Sermon Given at the Anglican Parish of Kingscliff & Pottsville, 14 December 2025

Bible Readings: Isaiah 35:1-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11: 2-11

Theme: The Three Faces of Advent: Joy, Patience, and Doubt in the Wilderness

Friends, as we draw near to Christmas, the Scriptures speak to us in three distinct voices: the voice of joy, the call to patience, and the honest whisper of doubt. These are not three separate journeys, but one path—the path of a heart preparing for God.

I. The First Face: Joy That Is Present

The prophet Isaiah cries out: “Rejoice greatly! Shout aloud!” This joy is not a suggestion; it is a command grounded in a reality. **God comes.** Not just in the past, as a memory. Not just in the future, as a hope. But here. Now. “Today is the day of salvation” (*2 Corinthians 6:2*).

Our world often tells us joy is a product of circumstance—the right gift, the perfect gathering, the absence of trouble. But the joy Isaiah proclaims, the joy of Advent, is different. It is the joy of Emmanuel, God-with-us. It meets us in the daily texture of our lives: in the smile of a friend, in the quiet moment of peace, in the resilience that surprises us in hardship. This joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit—a deep, abiding knowledge that we are not alone.

Jesus is the name and face of this joy. He is the embodiment of God’s delight in us. So, if your joy feels thin today, it’s okay. You can pray the simplest, most honest prayer: “Lord, let me experience Your joy. Let me feel Your presence.” Jesus meets us in that very asking.

II. The Second Face: Patience That Is Active

“I am not a patient person.” How many of us could say that? We live in a fast-food, next-day-delivery, instant-streaming world. We are not accustomed to waiting. But life, and Scripture, teach us that the most important things cannot be rushed.

The people of Israel waited 40 years to enter the Promised Land. The world waited centuries for the Messiah, from the promise to Adam and Eve to the stable in Bethlehem. A mother waits nine months, her body and soul participating in a slow, sacred work. Patience is not passive idleness. As James writes, it is the steady endurance of the farmer, who tends the soil and trusts the process.

Advent patience is active hope. It is doing the next right thing while trusting in God’s “not yet.” It is in the waiting that our character is formed, our hope is refined, and our eyes are trained to see differently. We learn that God’s timing is not a delay, but a depth.

III. The Third Face: Doubt That Seeks

And then, from a prison cell, we hear another voice—John the Baptist. This is the fiery prophet who pointed to Jesus and declared, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Now, imprisoned and facing death, he sends his disciples to ask: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Is this a failure? A collapse of faith? No. This is the doubt of a faithful heart in a dark place. When we are in a difficult situation—a prison of illness, grief, anxiety, or confusion—we question. Our certitudes are challenged. John shows us it is okay to bring our raw, aching questions to Jesus.

Notice Jesus' response. He doesn't scold John. He points to the evidence: "The blind see, the lame walk, the good news is preached to the poor." He invites John to look again, to see the works of the Messiah. Jesus is inviting us today to remember His works in our lives.

Here is the crucial truth: Doubt, when brought to Jesus, can deepen faith. Don't be afraid of a faith that doubts. A faith that never questions can be fragile, untested. But Jesus warns us: Don't remain in your doubt. Don't let it become your home. John's doubt sent him back to Jesus, seeking the true face of Jesus Christ.

We must keep seeking the true face of Jesus. Because we have a tendency, as someone wisely said, to make God in our own image and likeness. We shrink God down to our expectations, our politics, our preferences. But God is always bigger, wilder, more merciful, and more wonderful than our impressions of Him. Doubt can shatter our small idols and send us searching for the living God.

This Advent, God meets us in our joy, our impatience, and our doubt.

- He is the Source of our joy, present with us now.
- He is the Teacher of our patience, working in the waiting.
- He is the Answer to our doubts, not threatened by our questions.

The Christmas story itself is full of these three faces: Mary's joy, "My spirit rejoices!" The long patience of centuries fulfilled in a baby. The bewildering doubt of Joseph, resolved by a dream.

So, wherever you are this Advent:

- If you are joyful, rejoice! God is here.
- If you are impatient, wait actively. God is working.
- If you are doubting, ask honestly. God is big enough.

Come to the manger this Christmas seeking the true face of Jesus. He will not turn you away. Jesus is the Joy of the world, the Fulfillment of our waiting, and the solid ground for every questioning heart.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, in this season of Advent, grant us the gift of Your joy that shines in the darkness. Teach us the patience that trusts in Your perfect timing. And meet us in our doubts, that seeking Your true face, we may find our faith made stronger and deeper than ever before. Amen.

The Reverend Constantine Osuchukwu
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