

DECEMBER 5 2025 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

The message of Isaiah in the season of Advent is: those who lived in darkness have seen a great light.

Why do we live in darkness? So, what is this darkness? The darkness basically is a sense of despair. Well, we really seem to have it. You open the newspapers. You watch television. There are wars, and then, there will be treaties. And we know even as the treaties are made, these treaties will be broken and then, they make fresh treaties. And we say to the Lord, “Why are you leaving us in this darkness?”

Two millennia and a half ago, the Israelites had the same feeling of despair. To the east, they had the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and to the west, they had the Egyptians and a power that was just beginning to rise, the Romans. And they would look to the Lord and say, “We are your chosen people. Why are you allowing these people to persecute us?” And Isaiah assured them, “Do not be afraid. The Lord has heard the cry of the poor.”

Now, if we think to the Lord, look. I can manage everything by myself. I’ve got the brains. I’ve got the abilities to deal with all this situation, and we are no longer poor. The poor is the person who trusts that the Lord will come to their aid. And sure enough, here we had Isaiah telling us about an example that is so totally different.

Today, when we hear the Lord saying, “I will listen to your cry,” we want the Lord to answer it here and now. We live in a digital age, and if a file or an application does not open in nanoseconds, we abandon it. And the Lord takes his time in order to answer our prayers.

Whenever you hear about Lebanon, you hear about the magnificent cedars, and we are told the cedars are going to be turned into orchards.

And you say, “No way.” There’s no way you’re going to take these beautiful, magnificent trees and turn them into an orchard. Not only that; these will be turned into gardens. Totally unbelievable. And that is precisely the point that Isaiah wants to make with this. Namely, it is when things are totally unbelievable, incredible, that God enters into that picture and God hears the cry of the poor.

Another example that Isaiah gives us is the people who are poor come to the judges in order to get justice. Now, in the time of Israel, in the time of Jesus and the time of Isaiah, the judges did not sit in a court with a bailiff and with a hammer to give justice. They sat at the city gates, and the poor would come. The poor, the orphan, the stranger, and they would say, “We want justice to be done.” But there was a lot of corruption and a lot of bribery, and it was the rich that influenced these judges.

Sometimes, the case of the poor, the case of the widow, the orphan and the stranger was dismissed even without hearing. And the Lord said through Isaiah, “The Lord has heard the prayer of the poor.” The Lord himself is going to be both the defence of the poor and the judge. He will dismiss these corrupt judges, and the Lord will hear the cry of the poor.

Our Gospel today tells us the same story. God loved us so much that he sent his only begotten Son. In the letter to the Hebrews we are told, God, who spoke through the prophets and the patriarchs and the kings, in the fullness of time has sent his Son. And what would the Son do? The Son would hear the cry of the poor. Isaiah himself said he is the anointed one. When the Spirit of the Lord comes down upon him, the blind will see, the lame will leap like deer, and the poor will have the Good News proclaimed to them. The captives will be set free. God was fulfilling the promise that God made to the poor in the land.

And we notice now in the Gospel of Matthew, he's writing this Gospel to believers who had a Jewish background. And so, they wanted to see that everything that they did in their new faith in Jesus Christ was a fulfilment of the prophets; that Jesus was the Messiah that was proclaimed by the prophets. And he says, it's very simple. All the prophets said that when the Messiah would come, there would be healings. And sure enough, he is explaining these healings and describing these healings to us.

But there is another thing as well. You notice that the blind men, what did they say? "Jesus, Son of David." Now, "Jesus, Son of David" was a messianic title. The blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame would not know it. The scribes and the Pharisees would know it, but not them. If I ask you, "What is the second name of Elvis Presley?" You'd say, "I know who Elvis Presley is, but I don't know what the second name is." But if you're a fan, you would know it. I know it because it came up in a crossword puzzle. But basically, we don't know all these things, and the blind would not know that Jesus was the Son of David. And so, Matthew will put these words even into the unexpected places in order to show that Jesus was the Messiah that they were waiting for.

And you notice what he does? He follows Mark in all the healings. Where Mark speaks about a demon, a man possessed by the demons in Gergasa, Matthew will give us two men possessed by demons. When Matthew speaks about Bartimaeus, the blind man in Jericho, Matthew will have two blind men there. In Bethsaida, there were the blind men as we hear in our Gospel today, and there are two blind men. Well, why does Matthew do that? For one thing, Matthew wants to show that Jesus just does not come simply to do healings. He comes with power. But there's a second reason as well, and in Deuteronomy, in chapter 19,

verse 15, it says that if anything was to be legally true, there had to be two witnesses, and therefore, every healing has a second witness.

So, what does it mean to you and to me? Jesus, God, will bring salvation in the places that we least experience or expect. The blind, the deaf, we just discard them. There's no way salvation can come. And the Lord says our salvation will come. The turning point in our conversion will come precisely from there. So, keep your eyes open, your ears open, our hearts open, so that we can recognize the turning point in our conversion, because the Lord will hear the cry of the poor.