

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

In this weekend's Gospel, we hear that St. John the Baptist is in prison. Last week we heard him proclaiming the coming of the Christ as a powerful judge:

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fan is in his hand.

He will clear his threshing floor

and gather his wheat into his barn,

but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3:11b-12)

When Jesus begins His public ministry, however, it is not one of clearing the threshing floor and burning chaff – not one of judgment, but of healing and mercy. John is now confused. He sends messengers to Jesus to see if He really is the Messiah or if there is someone else.

How often have we been there?! How often have I heard the cry of the wounded, lonely and depressed, discouraged by circumstances, and without any hope? They so often cry out, "Are you really there, Jesus? Do you really love me?" It is a cry from the heart, and one that hears it aching from the hurt that is there. God doesn't act the way we expect Him to; He doesn't conform to our timetable. There are so many times when I've wondered what in the world (or in Heaven) God had planned because I couldn't see a way out of my circumstances. And yet, He always has a way out, a way through. He has always been there; He has never abandoned me, even in the darkest dungeons of my brokenness.

How does Jesus answer the messengers of John?

Go and tell John what you hear and see:

the blind regain their sight,

the lame walk,

lepers are cleansed,

the deaf hear,

the dead are raised,

and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.

And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me. (Matthew 11:4-6)

He doesn't answer the question directly. What does Jesus do? He points to how God *is* working, what God *is* doing. He does the same with us as well. When we are in our darkness and questioning God's existence or His love for us, He will often gently point to how He is working in our lives:

"Remember how I answered this prayer?"

"See the gifts I have given you."

"Look at how that person came up to encourage you."

"Gaze on the beauty of the sunset I created for *you*."

And a multitude of other ways.

The truth is that God *is* working in our lives. He is here! This day, may we recognize God's holy presence in our midst!