



Discipleship **Ideas for the Iowa District West**

Introduction

The following “Discipleship Ideas” from the readings are not intended for any other purpose than to provide ideas of application from each reading that may be included in the taught and preached Word for this particular Sunday to help teach a life of discipleship. L.C.M.S. pastors are gifted at preaching Law and Gospel, but often lack in the matter of personal applications to the Word. This tool is for no other reason than to offer some seeds of thought to do that.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT - SERIES C
December 13, 2015

From C.P.H. About the Cover: Every day we hear and see people who want to tell us something. We watch them on TV, we hear them on the radio, and we read them in newspapers or on our phones. Jesus tells us that none of these announcers are greater than John the Baptist, the messenger sent by God to prepare the way of the Lord. And yet, through faith in the Christ, you are greater than John in the kingdom of God.

First Reading; Zephaniah 3:14–20

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

“Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.

¹⁷The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

¹⁸I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.

¹⁹Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors.

And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.

²⁰At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: This third Sunday in Advent is traditionally known as the Sunday of Joy. That theme certainly permeates the readings appointed for the third Sunday in Advent and therefore naturally could become the application for the life of the believer. But there is more than simple joy that this text offers. In verse 15 we see the application of living without fear because the Lord is in our midst. There are also the truths that we can live quieted in God's love and gathered into the fellowship of the Church. Because of God's great love for sinners, all of these things can be applied to our lives as modern disciples of the Living Lord Jesus Christ who is near to us in Word and Sacrament.

Epistle Reading Philippians 4:4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: Paul continues the theme of joy by encouraging the matter of rejoicing and even repeating that encouragement. But once again there is more to be gleaned as application for the believer. Paul included the encouragement of not living with anxiousness about anything but instead engaging in prayer. Such disciplines are great witnesses to the fact that the peace of God is truly in the heart and mind of the believer. Such applications are certainly possible for the believer because of God's presence and grace at work in our lives.

Gospel Reading: Luke 7:18-28

¹⁸The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" ²¹In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²²And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

²⁴When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid

clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. ²⁶What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷This is he of whom it is written,
"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.'

²⁸I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Gospel Discipleship Notes: A good study of this text may take the student to the question of John toward our Savior and why he needed to ask it through his disciples. This leads to the important reaffirmation of how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. But to leave it there would be tragic. Certainly we need to be reaffirmed that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of all mankind, but how can we take that truth and apply it to the life of the disciple? Jesus told the disciples of John to "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard..." Here our savior provides an application for believers today of knowing the truth of who Jesus truly is. The final verse of the text also offers an application that living lives of repentance and faith in the Savior's forgiveness grants a tremendous blessing of what God has made us become. When such is the case, we have no greater desire than to love, serve and obey our God.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read **Zephaniah 3:14–20**

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

“Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.

¹⁷The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

¹⁸I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.

¹⁹Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors.

And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.

²⁰At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD.

1. What is understood by each of the names noted in verse 14?
2. Who truly is the King of Israel? How was this truth distorted in Israel’s history?
3. What does it mean that twice in this reading it says “The LORD your God is in your midst”?
4. What response to this truth is to take place and how does that translate to today?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read **Philippians 4:4–7**

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

6. Does the fact that Paul repeated the encouragement to rejoice in the Lord mean anything special?
7. What is meant by the encouragement to “let your reasonableness be known to everyone”? Why?

8. How does Paul encourage anxiousness being eliminated?
9. In living a life following this prescription, what is the ultimate blessing and benefit?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ: Luke 7:18–28

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²⁸I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

11. For whose benefit did John send two of his disciples to Jesus with the question?
12. How did Jesus answer the concern and what should that have meant to these disciples of John?
13. Explain what Jesus meant in verse 23.
14. Why did Jesus question the motive of why people went to hear and see John?
15. How is that like some in today's world?
16. What is meant by verse 28b?
17. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline (Leader's Guide)

Read Zephaniah 3:14–20

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

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"Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.

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1. Who is understood by each of the names noted in verse 14?

"Daughter of Zion" = It is a term of endearment of the loving, caring, patient relationship God has with His chosen people.

"Israel" = Is not merely a reference to the nation of people, but more specifically to the people of God.

"Daughter of Jerusalem" = This phrase is often in specific reference to those who were descendants of David and therefore those of the Messianic promise.

2. Who truly is the King of Israel? How was this truth distorted in Israel's history?

The true King of Israel is the Lord God Himself and this truth was distorted in Israel's history by the people's insistence on having an earthly kingship over the nation of Israel.

3. What does it mean that twice in this reading it says "The LORD your God is in your midst"?

It means exactly what it says. God was present with His people even as He is present with His people today. He was present in His Word and promise.

4. What response to this truth is to take place and how does that translate to today?

A number of responses were listed in verses 17-20 which were responses of God toward His people. In today's world the same is true as a result of God's presence among His people in Word and Sacrament.

5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read: Philippians 4:4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

6. Does the fact that Paul repeated the encouragement to rejoice in the Lord mean anything special?

Anytime something is repeated like this in the Greek language, it is noteworthy and important. To rejoice in the Lord is certainly that.

7. What is meant by the encouragement to “let your reasonableness be known to everyone”? Why?

This word is also translated as “gentleness ...forbearance...moderation.” The clarity of word encompasses each of these terms in English. A simple answer to this question is to live as a reflection of Christ in whatever we say, think or do. The reason for it is to become a witness of godliness in Christ Jesus to others.

8. How does Paul encourage anxiousness being eliminated?

This is done through the use of prayer which is an act of worship in which God can and does eliminate our anxieties.

9. In living a life following this prescription, what is the ultimate blessing and benefit?

The ultimate blessing or benefit is a life of peace which surpasses all understanding which is kept in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ: Luke 7:18–28

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11. For whose benefit did John send two of his disciples to Jesus with the question?

Scholars are divided on this issue. Some think it was for John's benefit, while others think it was solely for the benefit of his disciples. Since John clearly had identified Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," and since he was undoubtedly taught by his parents that this kinsman was the Lord, and since he clearly taught as well that Jesus must increase while he must decrease, it is apparent that John knew that Jesus is the Christ. It is therefore more likely that he sent his disciples to Jesus for their benefit and not his own.

12. How did Jesus answer the concern and what should that have meant to these disciples of John?

Through His work which included healing the sick, etc, Jesus showed that he was fulfilling the prophecies of the Messiah found in the Old Testament. This should have clarified the concern of the disciples.

13. Explain what Jesus meant in verse 23.

Answers will vary but it must come back to the concern that one who is offended by Jesus cannot confess Him as Savior and Lord. That confession is necessary for salvation.

14. Why did Jesus question the motive of why people went to hear and see John?

Motivation is important. Often people are merely investigating for knowledge, but just as often there are motivations that are not appropriate. Jesus was merely trying to clarify for the people who John was and why he was sent as the forerunner to the Christ.

15. How is that like some in today's world?

Often even today, people investigate spiritual matters for the wrong reasons. It might be because their friends or associates attend a particular church or because there is more enjoyable music or technology or because that experience makes them feel something they want to feel or whatever, rather than seeking to investigate the teaching of a church. John had a message of truth preparing people for the messiah and the true church today has a message of preparing people to receive that same messiah once again when He comes to judge the living and the dead.

16. What is meant by verse 28b?

The least in the kingdom is one who is truly repentant and who trusts in the forgiveness and salvation that is given to us in Jesus Christ. This alone is what makes one truly great in the Kingdom, not what one has done or said or preached or publically accomplished, but what one believes.

17. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

Living a life of rejoicing in God's mercy is what resounds in the readings appointed for today. That concern remains one of importance yet today because the disciples of the Living Lord Jesus are people who know the truth of their salvation and without doubt trust and believe their sins are forgiven and that because of the salvation of our God, we are given the blessings of joy and the privilege of serving in Christ's kingdom. We have reason to rejoice. Our God is with us and He has saved us.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

O Lord, on this third Sunday in Advent we rejoice in Your love for sinful man and Your mercy in coming to save us. As You made it known through Zechariah, make it known through Your Word today that You are in our midst through Word and Sacrament. Fill us with joy in believing that we might willingly serve You in whatever means are before us to the witness of Your glory and the benefit of our neighbor. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**