

Advent Midweek 2, December 13, 2023  
Text: John 1:29  
Theme: LOOK!

**We use tools to assist us in seeing things: Danya uses binoculars for birdwatching. For those times when we are sitting in the “nosebleed section” at the Lyric Opera or at Soldier Field we might want a pair of binoculars as well. Scientists use microscopes to examine microbes that the unaided human eye cannot see. Astronomers use telescopes to see stars in the universe that are millions of miles away. Many of us who are over 50 use readers or bifocals to help us read small print. These tools are used to help us see things that we physically struggle to see. Advent is a time for us to spiritually struggle to see things. We struggle to see our sin. We struggle to see our repentance. We struggle to prepare for seeing our Lord return for us as He has promised to do.**

**“Stop, Look, and Listen!” is the theme for our midweek worship during this season of Advent. Last week, the focus was on the Word of the Lord, who spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying, “...remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil....” Stop! This week, we focus on “Look!” Advent is a time when God desires that we look at our thoughts, words, and deeds. Advent, like Lent, is a penitential season. Both great feasts of the Church, Christmas and Easter and preceded by penitential seasons in which**

**we focus on our relationship with God. We stop, we look and we listen.**

**As we look at ourselves in the mirror of the Law, we see very clearly that we have sinned in multitudinous ways. The Law shows us that we are selfish, self-centered, sinful people who are tempted by Satan to spend our time and assets looking out only for our own interests and welfare. The Holy Spirit uses the Law of God to expose any notions we might have that we're not all that bad. When we become aware of our sinfulness, we sometimes look in one of three wrong directions.**

**First, when confronted by our sin and how offensive it is to God, we can begin to dwell too intently upon our sin. When this happens, it is easy to feel hopeless and overwhelmed, knowing what we deserve. It is easy to think that we are beyond His forgiveness and doomed to eternal damnation.**

**Second, when confronted with our sinfulness, we are tempted to look for hope in places other than where God has directed us to look. For instance, some people will look for hope in the Law, which has convicted them of sin. They reason if they try harder, they can do enough so that God will overlook their sins. Or they might try to dismiss that accusing Law as not applicable to them.**

**Third, sometimes we blind ourselves with denial and hardened hearts that reject God's Law as it confronts our sinfulness. We may look to ourselves or to other human beings for truth and wisdom. It's easier that way because, unlike God, other human beings are so understanding of sin! We may even distort what we've done or not done. We may lie to get others to see us as something that we are not. None of those solutions are going to help us.**

**Stop and look to Jesus!**

**When we face the reality of our sinfulness, God does not want us to dwell on and look only at our sins. He does not want us to look for hope in the Law or from false gods. There is no hope for salvation or joy in the Law. The Law makes us aware of our sins. And God does not want us to deny our sinfulness or look for help from other human beings who are in the same predicament as we are! Instead, God calls us to look to Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and salvation. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he did not say, "Oh look, someone who can show us how to live a holy life and earn forgiveness and salvation! No, he exclaimed, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29).**

**John spoke these words the day after the priests and Levites asked him if he was the Christ—that is, the One chosen by God to be the Savior. John did not look at this as an opportunity to bring glory**

**to himself, but rather told them, "I am not the Christ" (1:20). Like so many others, John had been waiting for the coming of the One who had been promised by God—the sacrificial Lamb—the One the prophet Isaiah wrote about who would come into this world and would be oppressed and afflicted and slaughtered, taking upon himself the very punishment we deserved.**

**In faith, like John the Baptist, we too see Jesus. As the Son of God, true God and true man, Jesus has accomplished for us what we could never have done for ourselves. As the Lamb of God, He has made possible the cleansing forgiveness that we need. By His perfect obedience to the Law of God, His death on the cross, and His descent into Hell, Jesus earned forgiveness for our sins.**

**"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2). Indeed, during this Advent season and all throughout the Church year, let us fix our eyes only on Jesus and only Jesus.**