

December 17-23

Third Sunday of Advent B

Church Begins at Home

An Advent Hymn for the Week

(can be read or sung after lighting the Advent wreath)

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.



Daily Readings

SUNDAY'S GOSPEL John 1:6-8, 19-28

This week's readings focus on the connection in Jewish thought between the Old Testament prophet Elijah and the coming Messiah. When people try to figure out who John the Baptist is, some ask if he might be Elijah. John denies the comparison, instead using words from the prophet Isaiah to describe himself as being a "voice" who calls attention to the Messiah.

MONDAY 1 Kings 18:1-18 (19-40)

Elijah was considered the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 9th century B.C. Elijah was a worker of miracles (providing food for a widow and raising her son from the dead — ch. 17) and he was a constant irritation to King Ahab and his wicked queen, Jezebel. Jezebel had introduced the worship of another god, Baal, to Israel. Here Elijah confronts Ahab for his apostasy. You might want to read the entire chapter to hear the famous story of Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.

TUESDAY 2 Kings 2:9-22

This story of Elijah passing his authority to his successor, Elisha, is sometimes called the "translation" of Elijah. This is because Elijah is said to have been taken up to heaven without dying. This led to the expectation that Elijah would return some day. A "mantle" is a loose, sleeveless coat. This story is the origin of the phrase "pass the mantle" when one person succeeds another in a position.

WEDNESDAY Mark 9:9-13

Here is another situation in which Jesus is asked about the expectation that Elijah will be the precursor of the Messiah. Whereas in Sunday's gospel John the Baptist denies that he is Elijah, here Jesus cryptically says that John does fulfill the role of Elijah.

THURSDAY Malachi 3:16—4:6

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, but since the books are not listed in chronological order, it isn't the last book to be written. Malachi expresses the post-exilic expectation of a great day of salvation when the righteous are restored and the wicked punished. Notice the promise that Elijah will return before "the day of the LORD" comes.

FRIDAY Acts 3:17—4:4

This is part of a sermon Peter preached soon after the day of Pentecost. He makes the point that Jesus is the Messiah who was foretold by the prophets.

SATURDAY Luke 1:26-38 (Tomorrow's Gospel reading)

The past three weeks have laid the foundation for the coming of the messiah. On the 4th Sunday of Advent, we finally turn our attention to the birth of Jesus in this story called "The Annunciation" — the announcement of Jesus' birth.

Blessing of the Advent Wreath

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
ruler of the universe.

Your prophets spoke of a
messenger who would come "to
prepare the way of the Lord." We
bless you for your servants
Elijah and John.

Bless us as we light the candles
on this wreath.

Strengthen our hearts as we wait
for the coming of the Lord. May
his light pierce the darkness of
this world, for he is our light and
our salvation. Amen