Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me” (Luke 7:23).

Is 45:6C-8, 18, 21C-25; *Luke 7:18b-23*

Today's gospel from Luke repeats Sunday's version from Matthew 11 of the story of John the Baptist sending messengers to Jesus to ask if he is the Messiah. John was apparently troubled that Jesus' message of mercy did not match his own preaching of the coming wrath of God on sinners. Jesus sends word to John that evidence of his divine mission was that the prophecy of Isaiah would be fulfilled when the promised one arrived. Witness the healing and joy coming to the land and its people.

Jesus's message ends with the words: "Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me." This special beatitude comes to those who are able to set aside their initial expectations and accept God's surprising truth without being scandalized. Jesus came not with threats and judgment, but with mercy from a loving and forgiving God.

This "good news" was welcomed by sinners, but the righteous rejected it as "too good to be true." It did not fit their expectation that sinners would be punished while they would be blessed. The blessing came instead to those able to grasp the wonder of God's unconditional and undeserved love for everyone, especially sinners and failures.

Our joy at Christmas is first in knowing that we are among the sinners and failures who need mercy. Then, when we are open to the surprise and scandal of undeserved love, we will grasp that love is not something we can earn or achieve, but a pure gift. Blessed are those who accept this gift, for they in turn will be eager to give it to others.