**Getting Ready for the Third Sunday of** **Advent**

**The New Testament Scriptures**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 – “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Sprit. So not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; holdfast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.”***

**Reflection: In this portion of his letter, Paul is urging the church to live with an inner joy, peace, and gratitude that can be seen in all their relationships. As you read this passage, listen carefully to Paul’s words. He is quite serious about this.**

**Verses 19-22 remind us that we do not rejoice, pray, or give thanks out of ignorance, but in careful living. We are cautioned not to “throw cold water” on the work of the Holy Spirit. We are to learn how to discern which spirit is at work among us.**

**A trusted church leader once said, “if the Holy Spirit lifts you up, it won’t put you back in the same place.” The new place will be marked by your growth in love, hope, peace, and justice. If it is God’s good work, honor it and hold on to it. It if can harm, mislead or diminish someone or something, as Paul says, to let it go.**

**By living a prayerful and attentive life in God’s presence, we can find joy in our faith that God’s saving grace will keep us while we walk in the valleys shadowed by death and as we enjoy the green pastures of life.**

**Prayer:** God, may I rejoice always and give thanks no matter the circumstances. Life me up when I am struggling. Place me where you need me to be. Guide by your Holy Spirit, help me to grow in love, hope, joy and justice. Amen.