

Advent Script: 2nd Sunday of Advent (Dec 7, 2025)

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

Dr. Shively's Reflection

Welcome, beloved friends and family, to this Second Sunday of Advent, December 7th, 2025. Today, as we draw nearer to Christmas, let's read these Bible verses hand-in-hand with the voices of African American women—preachers, writers, artists, and activists—who help us hear the Spirit anew.

Our Advent Scriptures for this 2nd Sunday are Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19, Romans 15:4-13, and Matthew 3:1-12. It's Matthew 3:1-12 I want to focus on today, guided by the wisdom of Jarena Lee—a Black woman preacher from the 19th century, still preaching to us if we let her.

Let's listen to Matthew 3:1-12 in the NRSVue:

"In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' ... Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ... His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

And in The Message:

"While John was baptizing people he said, 'It's urgent—change your life. God's kingdom is here. ... It's firewood. ... He's going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He'll place everything true in its proper place. All the rest, he'll burn with fire.'"

In the mid-1830s, in Brooklyn, New York, Jarena Lee preached on verse 12 at Asbury Church, describing a night when "the Lord made bare his arm; some were arrested under the power of God, and fell to the floor crying for mercy, while believers were strengthened in the faith of Christ". For Lee, Matthew 3:12 is not distant or abstract. It is urgent and alive—God sifting and sorting, not to condemn, but to liberate and renew.

Lee saw the "winnowing fork" and "unquenchable fire" as metaphors of Spirit-driven transformation. The fire isn't only judgment—it's revival, mercy, and radical change for those

willing to let the animating power of the Spirit infuse their lives. She witnessed bodies stirred, spirits shaken, believers renewed. In her testimony, the threshing floor is both altar and battleground—a place where repentance leads to new life, and hope is kindled by God's relentless work.^[1]

This Advent, Lee calls us to see life as a dynamic, divine gift—full of possibility and immediate for every soul. Matthew 3 as she preaches it is a summons: step into God's movement, be sifted, be set free. The goal is always transformation, never mere punishment.

So as we prepare, preach, and study, let's take these three lessons into the season:

Takeaway Points

- **Advent is the time for Spirit-led sifting:** God's movement is a sorting, an invitation to let go of what no longer brings life and receive new strength.^[1]
- **Revival is communal—hearts and bodies respond together:** Lee's account shows us that true encounters with God move both the individual and the community, stirring repentance and strengthening faith.^[1]
- **Black women's voices expand our hope:** Listening to Lee, we embrace an Advent hope born from struggle, liberation, and divine renewal—a word especially needed in our times.^[1]

Closing Prayer

Spirit of the Living God, sift us this Advent—clear out what no longer serves Your purpose. Stir us as you stirred Jarena Lee and those gathered in faith; bring us to your mercy, strengthen us for love, and let your fire be our revival and liberation. Amen.