



Advent 2022
Lapeer Free Methodist Church
Week 3

Week 3: Joy

Day 1:

Joy in My Heart

“So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”
Romans 16:22-24 (NIV)

You know the song we learned as kids- “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, Where? Down in my heart to stay”? I hope you sang that as you read it. I also hope that you feel in your heart and bones the truth of this song.

Jesus Christ has made it so that the Joy of the Lord is truly ours. We can claim it. But that’s the thing, we have to CHOOSE to claim it! Ask for your Joy in Christ’s name and it will be yours.

There’s another song about joy, by For King and Country and it also brings this idea home for me. Part of the lyrics go like this:

“Though I walk through the valley in the shadow of night
Oh with You by my side, I’m stepping into the light
I choose Joy”

No matter your circumstances today, go ahead and ask for some Joy. May the Joy of the Lord be with you.
— Sarah Grant

Action: Take a few moments to listen to ‘Joy’ by King and Country (lyric video here: <https://youtu.be/E-r7ogDaaEQ>) Write your reflections below:

Day 2: Exile

Jeremiah 30:10. So do not be afraid, Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel,' declares the Lord. 'I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid.

What does exile have to do with joy???

We live in exile, trapped in a world of worry, a world of our own making. We are separate from each other. Throughout the Bible, the people of God search for community. We are looking in the wrong places. We should look to Jesus. Who was more of an exile than the one who left the glory of heaven to live on earth?

Look at how he lived. He lived in poverty, in simplicity. But he didn't close his doors, trying to preserve what he had. He reached out to the poor, the needy, the ill, the refugee. And, in the greatest sacrifice, He descended into Hell, the one place where God is not. Can you imagine the pain of that isolation? The Son separated from the Father and the Spirit. Alone. He did that for me. For you. For us.

Christmas can be a difficult time, a time when isolation and this exile can seem amplified. When you feel alone, try to follow the example of Jesus and reach out to the poor, the needy, the lonely. Joy can be in such short supply, as we feel the pangs of exile, longing for some place that we have never been - but that we know that we were not left as orphans in this place. We can have joy in both that, and that we are headed toward a place that truly feels like home in ways our spirit craves each and every day.

And, I invite you to participate in this year's "Darkest Night" service 12/21 @ 6:00 pm. This will be a time to share our grief, our sadness, even in the face of such a joy as Jesus' incarnation. We will lament as the exiled - but share joy with one another of the home yet to come.

— Sally Eilersen

Action: What pain of exile do you experience? Write it below. Then, ask the Father to, in time, replace that pain that only comes from him. You can use the below space (or the back of your reader) to write your prayer, if you choose:

Day 3: Advent Joy

On the third Sunday of Advent, many churches will light another candle, this time pink as a symbol of Advent joy. The third Sunday of Advent is called Joyful Sunday. But what exactly is biblical joy? Let's look more closely at the meaning behind our Advent joy.

Israel's Joyful Expectation

As Christmas draws ever more near, we joyfully look forward to our celebration of Jesus' birth. We look back at the blessed event and rejoice in a promise fulfilled, a Savior born. But in the years and centuries before Christ's birth, God's people waited in joyful expectation, for a Savior promised, but One who had not yet come. Their joy was not based on the knowledge of what God had already done through his Son Jesus Christ, but their joy was an outpouring of their faith in what God WOULD do.

Our Joyful Response

Today, our joy is anchored in the knowledge that God fulfilled his promise. And with Advent more than half over, our joyful anticipation of Christmas is coming to a head. It's easy to be giddy and full of rejoicing when we replay the angels words, "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" ([Luke 1:11](#)).

When Christ came and dwelt among his people, he taught them about God's love and urged them to remain in him, saying "I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!" ([John 15:11](#)). Paul encouraged the Colossians saying, "May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light" ([Colossians 1:12](#)).

Today, our joy, fueled by the Holy Spirit, is what God uses to spread his joy throughout the world. Mother Teresa once said "Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls. A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love." True biblical joy is what God calls us to, and it is a joy that endures whether we're in the throes of cheerful Christmas anticipation or the lows of post-holiday blues. So, this Advent (and beyond), will you respond to God's call to be joyful?

-excerpts from Robin Basselin's "Advent Joy" <https://todaydevotional.com/blog/advent-joy>

Actions: What is your response to God's call to be joyful? Write it below or on the back of your reader:

Day 4: The Plans I have for you

Jeremiah 29:10-12. This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."

We like to think of this passage starting with the second verse, forgetting that it starts with "when 70 years are completed..." 70 years! Many of those hearing this message would not see the Promised Land. Their life would be lived out in Babylon.

Here's the question: Can we find joy in the Plans of God when they are not OUR plans? We want to see the completion of the plans we have for ourselves, which may or may not be the plans God has for us. We want the rewards without the trials, but that's not how it works.

What if Jesus had decided that the plan of dying on the cross wasn't what he wanted? We know he struggled with that - Matthew 26: 36-46 tells us he "travailed," asking God to have the cup pass him. After all, he was sinless. But he thought of us and our needs, not his own. "Not my will, but yours," was his response. Even in the face of pain, and death, and and separation from God. Not my will ...

We make a lot of plans this time of year. But are they our plans or God's? What if we challenge ourselves to respond just like Jesus. Every time we make a plan, what if we sincerely follow it with, "Not my will, but Yours?" Could you find joy during this season laying your plans before the Father, and then trust him enough to listen, and to respond accordingly?

Today, think about the many plans you have this Christmas season. Are they what God wants you to do to prepare for His son? Write your response below:
—Sally Eilersen

Day 5:

"In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came to her and said, 'Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you.' But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. Then the angel told her: 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.'" Luke 1:26-33

The Unconquerable Gift of Joy

Happiness is an emotion that can disappear as quickly as it rises to the surface. Joy, however, is a choice. We have a choice. God gives us a joy that is unconquerable. We can choose to live in an attitude of resentment, anger and fear or we can choose to pursue the joy of Christ. So what is the picture of joy in the Bible?

Joy is trusting when you want to doubt.

"Trust in the LORD forever, because in Yah, the LORD, is an everlasting rock!" (Isaiah 26:4). As Christ followers we aren't pressured to do it all for everyone. We trust in Jesus to do the heavy lifting. The key is trust. We just need to have Mary's response to the coming of Jesus, "'I am the Lord's slave,' said Mary. 'May it be done to me according to your word'" (Luke 1:38).

Joy is receiving what you want to reject.

Can you imagine how the innkeeper would have felt if he said to Mary and Joseph, "Of course you can't stay in that stable! That's for paying customers. Who do you take me for?" We find joy in making room for people in need. Reflect on the mysterious words found in Hebrews: "Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2).

Joy is celebrating when you want to fear.

What's the first thing angels say to mortals? It's standard protocol. In just about every divine encounter the angels say: "Fear not." I can hear Jesus instruct His most trusted angels. "OK, let's go over this again ... Most of the people that I'll tell you to speak to will be scared out of their wits! So let's practice the greeting one more time." Then the angels would all say in unison, "Fear not."

Understand Why We Can Be Joyful

The message is clear. God is not looking for ways to scare us into faith. He drew near to us to relieve the worries we have about crossing over the divide between heaven and earth. He wants you to know that He's going to take care of you no matter what happens. One of the names that He was called long before he ever stepped on this world's stage was Immanuel meaning "God with us."

Matt Tullos

<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/devotions-christmas-advent-week-three-joy>

Days 6 and 7: Selah

Begin today's Selah with this beloved carol. There are many verses - here's my favorite one:

*"Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room...
Joy to the Earth, the Savior reigns
Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love"*

While the pursuit of happiness is listed among the Constitutional "rights" in this country, joy remains in short supply it often seems. We often struggle to define joy, instead settling for its cousin happiness. Joy isn't something we can chase with our actions and plans. Instead, Joy is something we find when the depths of our spirit cry out to our Creator, and we are washed over with a gift only he can truly give.

In a section of Deuteronomy about tithing and offering to God, it says that after giving an offering, "then you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household" ([Deuteronomy 26:11](#)).

The Bible is clear that joy comes from God ([Neh. 8:9-10](#)), and our joy is a product of what God has done and continues to do. It is gladness and contentedness flowing out of the well-spring of God's faithfulness and mercy, quite independent of our circumstances.

The Psalmist writes, "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it...Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness" ([Psalm 96:11-13](#)). Isaiah declares, "Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their suffering" ([Isaiah 49:13](#)).

God's people had joy because they anticipated a time when the promised Messiah would come and "Those who have been ransomed by the Lord...will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness" ([Isaiah 35:10](#)). Their faith in God promise meant that even in sorrow, "Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines. Though the yield of the olive should fail...Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation" ([Hab. 3:17-18](#)).

(Excerpted from "Advent Joy" Robin Basselin)

