

Advent Week 3

Joy

(Light the first, second purple candles and the rose-colored candle. In church liturgy, the rose color signifies joy)

Joy is something that is often mislabeled as happiness. Many things in this world can make us happy. A new toy, a delicious slice of cake, a blanket of fresh snow to make snowmen out of, or better yet, a snow day! All these things can and do make us happy. But they are only temporary. The toy gets old and broken, the cake gets eaten, the snow melts and school starts again the next day. But joy is something different. True joy does not end when a life circumstance ends. In the Bible, joy is most often recognized to and tied to the actions of God. For instance, the miraculous conception and birth of John the Baptist became an occasion for joy and gladness (Luke 1:14). Shepherds hear that the birth of the messiah is an occasion for great joy for all people (Luke 2:10). Throughout scripture, it becomes clear that joy has more to do with what God has done and is doing, not a marginal aspect of daily life.

Read Luke 2:8-20

The angles declare a message that would bring “joy to all!” In what ways would this bring joy to everyone? (because God has made a way for there to be forgiveness of sins and peace between God and man)

What are some things that make you happy?

What are some things that God has done that bring you joy?

How can we know the difference between temporary happiness and lasting joy?

Joy and faith go hand in hand throughout much of the Bible. Faith is grounded in looking forward to things that are to come or things we can't see (Heb. 11:1). It's what and where our faith is placed that brings us true joy. For example, if we had no faith that God was real and that Jesus actually came and died for our sins, we would struggle to find real, lasting joy in this broken world. However, if our faith is grounded in a creator God, we have joy that God will finish the redemption he begun through his Son Jesus on the cross. Faith and joy grounded in what is to come can't be taken from us by unpleasant circumstances. Paul sums it up in 2 Corinthians 6:10 when he writes, “Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.”

The shepherds had very little that night on the hills outside Bethlehem, and yet they were overcome with joy and were invited to be some of the first to lay eyes on the long-awaited Messiah.

This Christmas, may we be focused on the type of joy that can't be shaken or taken from us because we know God will finish the redemption he started the night of the first Christmas.

Pray together as a family that God would help us see the joy in each situation and not allow temporary unhappiness to steal our lasting joy in what God is doing in our lives every day.