

The Advent Disciple

DECEMBER 13, 2020

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JOY

Listen to the word of God
from Isaiah:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. ...

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people, the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Advent is about joy. But our times seem little suited for rejoicing. Our culture irritates and entertains, intoxicates and numbs, but rejoicing seems like a foreign idea. You can't do it on cue. Joy can't be bought and sold. You can't plan for it or train for it. It doesn't fit into a well-ordered life, and it's not FDA approved.



When they
saw the
star, they
rejoiced
exceedingly
with great
joy.

Matthew 2:10

Joy comes only when least expected. We rejoice only when life has been turned on its ear; when—whatever we feared, whatever we steeled ourselves against--some gift of God has presented itself instead. When we rein in our loves to protect ourselves from pain, when we curtain our hopes from fear of disappointment, when we equip ourselves with cynicism to avoid looking foolish, we do so at the expense of joy.

As freedom can only be tasted in all its sweetness by those who know the feel of chains, so joy sings with its most full-throated glory only in spirits enlarged by the weight of despair and softened by the brine of tears. Pleasures floats on the surface of life. Happiness flits across a moment or an hour. But joy springs from the depths.

Joy is new life beating in a heart that has been broken. Joy is awakening to a fair morning from a nightmare of reality. Joy is a flight sunward on wings you had forgotten you had. Joy is the sound of laughter erupting from a procession of grief. Joy is God's melody amid the discord of life, a song carrying the rhythm of eternity and touching the chords of longing in our souls.

Let us pray:

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

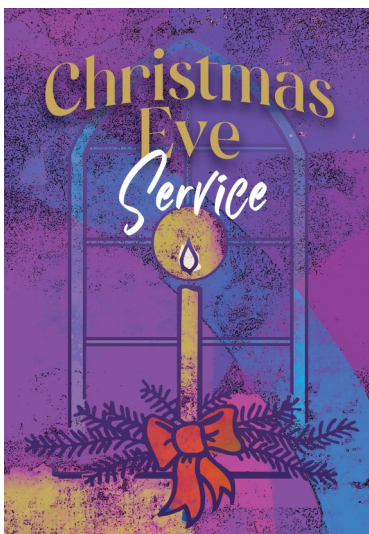
We give thanks to you, O God, for the promise of full joy that this season brings to light.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

For all the troubles life can bring, you bring amazing possibilities that fill our hearts with joy.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

Renew in us this day the promises of light after darkness, day after night, hope after despair, joy in this and every morning, for our trust is in you. Amen.



Please make your reservations for our

Christmas Eve Service

Call or text message 540-748-0274 and leave a message indicating your intent to attend the Christmas Eve Service and how many people will be attending in your family. **Even if you regularly attend Sunday Services, please take the time to verify your plans to attend on Christmas Eve.**

DEADLINE: December 20th

HOLY NAME CALLING

LIGHT OF THE WORLD, I AM

*Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." **John 8:12***

*Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am. **John 8:54-59***

In these two passages, Jesus gives himself new names (or at least, names new to his hearers). First he claims to be Light itself, the first thing God created back when the world was formless and void, the thing that allows us to perceive all other things. Saying you're the first thing ever is a pretty big claim to make, but Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes on to basically claim he's God. "I AM" is a name that God reveals back in the book of Exodus. Any Jew listening would have understood just what Jesus meant when he called himself "I AM" - and probably would have been shocked to hear it. It usually doesn't go well when people give themselves their own "big-deal nicknames." What would happen if you started telling people to call you "GOAT (Greatest of All Times)," or "Top Dog", or "Boss," or "Kingpin" - never mind "God"! But Jesus does nothing by halves. He claims he's not only the one who makes it possible for you to know the world, but that he is existence itself. Without him, you wouldn't know anything; without him, we wouldn't even exist.

ANYTIME

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Gather all the figures from your Nativity scene; if you don't have one, draw or print up an online paper doll version. Put all of the characters into a bag or pillow case and take turns drawing them out one by one (if yours are too fragile, write their names on slips of paper and draw those out of the bag). As you draw each character, tell her or his part in the story as best you can (feel free to embellish!), then place them in the "stable." Don't forget to include some of the inanimate "characters" like the star, the manger, the stable, the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and so on. If you're not sure why something is included or what one of the characters did, feel free to look it up!

Bonus Names

Advocate
1 John 2:1

Alpha and Omega
Revelation 1:8

Beloved
Luke 3:22

Bread of Life
John 6:35

Bright Morning Star
Revelation 22:16

Carpenter
Mark 6:3

Cornerstone
Ephesians 2:20

Foundation
1 Corinthians 3:11

Gate for the Sheep
John 10:7

Good Shepherd
John 10:11

Immanuel
Isaiah 7:14

Indescribable Gift
2 Corinthians 9:15

Lamb of God
John 1:29

Messiah
Luke 2:11

... and he is named

Wonderful
Counselor,

Mighty
God,

Everlasting
Father,

Prince
of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6, NRSV

Advent Calendar

(Actions, Questions, Things to Ponder that will help you experience the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of the Season)

<p>December 15</p> <p>Get Connected</p> <p>Find a joke and tell it or text it to a friend.</p>	<p>December 16</p> <p>What is one thing you can do to make the world better, stronger, and more loving?</p>	<p>December 17</p> <p>Have a dinner picnic in the glow of your Christmas tree.</p>
<p>December 18</p> <p>Share a conversation: What do worry most about? What are you most thankful for?</p>	<p>December 19</p> <p>Name a book that changed your life. Why? (Share online if you wish)</p>	<p>December 20</p> <p>Write a “thank you” letter to God. Place it under your tree and read it on Christmas Eve.</p>

During the third week in Advent, we spend time thinking about joy.

From Psalm 5:11, we hear these words, “But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you.”

Two purple candles and one pink candle are lit.

Too often, we think joy is something big, O God. A brass band or a parade can certainly bring us joy. Just as easily and far more often, we can feel joy in a hug or the squeeze of hand, we can see joy in a smile or hear it in laughter. Help us to not overlook the simple joys that peak into our lives daily. This week in our Advent journey, open our eyes to the joy that surrounds us. Amen.



— THIRD SUNDAY OF —
ADVENT