

Advent pt 3 Joy

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Advent / Isaiah 51:9–11; Romans 15:13, John 16:22, John 15:1-11

I want to talk about joy today. I think one of the most amazing promises we see in the advent of Jesus is the message of the angels to the shepherds in [Luke 2](#): “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.”

That’s a message we need to hear. Because we live in a time where people pursue happiness to the point of self destruction and think they have joy.

To really understand joy you have to understand what it is not. Joy is not happiness. Happiness is based on circumstances. When things are good we are happy and the better things are the happier we get. Happiness is an impermanent state. We can be happy one moment and literally lose it the next...trust me I play golf, I know.

Joy is different. We experience joy regardless of circumstances because it comes from Someone else other than us.

One interesting thing to note, joy comes from God alone. [Romans 15:13](#) says that **God “fills us with joy” and that it comes from believing**. And alongside it comes peace which lets us abound in hope. Seeing a pattern here?

Advent is about these three things, firstly, bound up in a little baby in a manger.

But because joy is a gift, we must be willing to receive it. God gives it to us, but we must accept that gift and to accept it we must be willing to know it is there, and to trust in God to provide it, and to accept we can do nothing to sustain it in and of ourselves.

Turn with me to [Isaiah 51:9-11](#).

The arm of the Lord, being called to awaken, is the work of God in history. **The people are asking God to act on their behalf, as He has in the past.** They need His presence!

Joy starts with recognizing God's PRESENCE! (the importance of slowing down)

Isaiah 40–66 God's past Deeds Assure Future Intervention (51:9–16)

it is merely a call to action so that the people can experience the fulfillment of his promises. **A second request is that his arm should "clothe itself with strength," an image drawn from the practice of soldiers putting a sheath on their arms to prepare for battle**

Then when we see recognize His presence, we can see His POWER. Look at verse 10.

God has not just been present but He has been acting on our behalf. **Here, the prophet reminds them of the time God allowed their people to cross the floor of the Red Sea.** How could they not trust Him to deliver them from any calamity or suffering when He has done the impossible!

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These are images that remind everyone of God's power over nature and history, **his ability to accomplish his purposes for his people in the most difficult of circumstances, and his ability to redeem his people.**

Church, we do a poor job sometimes of remembering all God has done for us. **I think, in our culture of immediacy, we are losing our sense of history.** We rely on social media's "a year ago" feature to remind us of a dinner out or a vacation, but fail to remember how God has provided.

Take a minute right now, can you name a time where God came thru when no one else could have?

Now stop and take stock of what happened in your soul when you remembered that. That's joy.

What would happen if you did that regularly?

How would that change your trajectory?

What does that do to the people here? Look at verse 11.

Sorrow and sighing flee- not because their circumstances have changed, because **their FOCUS has changed**. And they react to this joy with worship.

Church there is a reason why worship is so powerful. It changes our focus. One of the greatest lies of the deconstruction movement in the last 3 years has been the attack on corporate worship. The activity. **I am not saying that people can't be manipulated by cool lights or graphics, but I am saying that singing the truths of God with your chest lifts the soul because you are singing truth!** And truth that brings joy is amazing.

Isaiah 40–66 God's past Deeds Assure Future Intervention (51:9–16)

Just as the people rejoiced and sang God's praise in the Song of the Sea after the exodus (Exod 15), so God's people desire to sing his praise now and eventually when he redeems his people in the future. Another important eschatological change is the removal of all sorrow, mourning, and sighing, for at that time there will no longer be afflictions, fighting, and death. Those praying are looking forward to that day and interceding to encourage God to bring about that day in the near future.

And who are these people? They are the "ransomed of the Lord." We are also the ransomed of the Lord. Different ransom, and more permanent, but that is us. And when we know what Jesus did to ransom us, that fills us with joy.

You MATTER to God, so much that He came for you. And He gives you joy when you are with Him.

One more vital truth...**no one can take that joy from you.** Look at [John 16:22](#).

John 12–21 (2) Sorrow and Joy (16:20–22)

Here this Johannine verse seems to suggest a similar understanding when it points to the fact that with the coming of the resurrection of Jesus “no one will take away your joy.” Joy, then, is multidimensional and can have eschatological overtones. **It also clearly reminds us that there are those who would try to scuttle the disciples’ joy. The resurrection brings the beginning of a new age**

See that no one...you know what that means in Greek? “No one.” Yeah. It’s not some fancy phrase. No one steals your joy.

So why do we struggle with sustaining joy? We focus on the fight instead of the Father. And we let temporary things replace eternal ones for a moment.

Look at [John 15:1-11](#).

John 12–21 (1) The Mashal of the Vine and the Branches: A Portrait of Discipleship (15:1–11)

As this core mashal comes to its final stage, it focuses our attention on a wonderful capstone promise of joy. Obedience, love, fruit bearing, being pruned could all be viewed as rather painful and demanding ideas that scarcely suggest excitement or desirability. But that is hardly the goal of the mashal. **The purpose of abiding in the vine is to provide the sense of delight to those who are authentic disciples of Jesus, even though they may face pain or persecution**

Joy is not mentioned in John, except a single instance, before this verse, but **after this verse it appears 5 times in quick succession.** There is a point to that.

John 12–21 (1) The Mashal of the Vine and the Branches: A Portrait of Discipleship (15:1–11)

it could be legitimately concluded that one of the major purposes of the Farewell Cycle and particularly of this core mashal is to help Christian readers glimpse the perspective of God concerning the death/departure of Jesus and thus to view their own pain in light of the divine perspective. Such a perspective will not produce a superficial, fairy tale-like “happily-ever-after” attitude but **a deep sense of well-being and joy that their lives are united in the vine of Jesus and thus in his self-giving death and powerful resurrection** (cf. the disciples’ reaction of joy at the resurrection in 20:20).

We sustain joy when we focus on the love of the Father and obedience to Him rather than the trials of the times. When we abide, joy sustains. When we don’t, joy fades. How close are you to the Father today? Not how easy is your life? Not how happy was your day? **How near are you to the Father.** The key to joy is Jesus.