

Advent Week Four – The Priest of Joy

Advent is a wonderful time to bring our attention and reverence to the birth of Jesus and the true meaning of the Christmas season. It is a time where Christians from around the globe slow down to reflect on the peace, joy, love and hope that Jesus Christ came down to secure for us.

Christmas is a reminder that even though we are dirty and sometimes a little hard to be around, Jesus came to welcome us back into his presence. He came to bring back access to the Father. This means that though we live in a broken and dirty world, that the things that separated us from God were handled by Jesus and he works as our priest to bring us true and lasting joy.

Devotional:

Scott Harrison is the owner of a charity called Charity Water*. He wrote about this in his book Thirst. Scott lived a reckless and selfish life in the party scene of New York where he did all the things that left his parents in ministry heartbroken. But one day the emptiness overwhelmed him and he decided it was time to follow Jesus in a way that was just as reckless as his party life. He boarded a Mercy Ship that was heading to Africa to perform life saving surgeries for free. The thing he didn't expect is to be wrecked by this experience. Not because of the suffering, but because of the number of people who had to be turned away. There were too many hurting people for the Mercy Ships to help them all.

Scott found one of the doctors on the way back to America and asked him, "What can be done?" He wanted to know what needed to change for these surgeries to not even be necessary. The doctor told him that the vast, vast majority of illness and disease would be eradicated if the people had access to clean water. So simple. Such an easy answer. So much unnecessary pain ended, if people simply had access to clean water.

The story of Christmas is people suffering and hurting because they need a simple solution. Grace. But grace was hidden behind the veil of the temple. Christmas happened so that Jesus could come and rip that veil from top to bottom. Just as these people needed clean water, we need grace. It was a simple need, but something they could not provide for themselves without outside intervention. Christmas is the story of grace finally becoming available. The access we get to grace through the torn veil is why we are so eager to celebrate joy at Christmas!

Getting Started:

- How do you plan to spend Christmas?
- Remember when you were a kid and started thinking about the next Christmas the day after Christmas? How long does it take for you to be excited for Christmas next year?

Digging in:

- Read Hebrews 4:14
- Display four candles (one for each week). Light candle one, two, three, and four – the Peace Candle, the Hope Candle, the Love Candle, and the Joy Candle.

Questions:

1. The beauty of Jesus is that he is the God who is with us. That means he is with us in our pain, in our suffering, in our grief, and in our joy. What was a moment you realized that Jesus was with you?
2. What does it mean to you to have access to God because of Jesus tearing the veil?
3. How can Christmas be used as an opportunity for you to share the joy of Jesus with those around you who don't yet have it?

*If you'd like to know more about Scott Harrison's story and Charity Water you can visit charitywater.org