

222 December 13, 2023

Advent Week 3-Joy

We continue our observance of Advent with a reminder of what Advent means. Advent is a translation of the Latin ***adventus***, meaning 'coming; arrival' which is translated from the Greek ***parousia***, or 'coming'. In the New Testament, parousia often refers to the future second coming of Jesus. Most Advent observances are from three simultaneous perspectives: 1) Jesus coming at birth in Bethlehem; 2) Jesus coming into the lives of believers at salvation, and: 3) Jesus Second Coming. The historical purpose of observing Advent is for believers to focus on these three perspectives, intentionally reflecting on Jesus' birth into this world, His present-day living in the hearts of believers, and His future return. We hope that by observing Advent it will help you focus on these three perspectives instead of our culturally consumer-focused holiday obsessions. Christ's birth should help us focus on God's plan to offer all humanity the chance to be restored to relationship with Him, the holy purposes God has for our redeemed lives, and the sure and confident hope we can have in His coming again.

We started with a focus on Hope in the first week. Last week we focused on Peace. Biblical peace is more than the absence of strife or conflict. It is an attitude of tranquility despite adversity. The Hebrew word for peace, *Shalom*, goes far beyond not fighting with others, or peace as we know it. Shalom is, in essence, how things are meant to be: a slice of heaven. The peace of God allows us to look at others through heaven's eyes and help guide the world to see God's here and not-yet here kingdom. Peace from God, biblical peace, allows us to trust in God's promises, through restful, tranquil faith, despite the dark, scary world around us.

Week 3-Joy

This week of Advent reflects on the joy that comes through Jesus' arrival, and through the salvation he has gifted us. Believers should want to highlight the importance of joy in advent season. During a time where depression is at an all-time high and people seem to be in the most despair, this focus offers a bright light during a dark time. It also highlights the joy the shepherds experienced when they received the good news about Christ's birth. During the middle of the night, the darkest time, the shepherds encountered angels. Throughout the Bible,

joy and gladness are related to the life of Israel and the Church. This joy is not only a response to present blessings of a covenant relationship with God, but also an anticipation of a future blessed state, when the redeemed will be able to enjoy the fullness of the presence of God. Biblical joy goes far beyond momentary happiness--like the happiness a child might experience when they unwrap a gift that they'd hoped for on Christmas day. It is an extreme happiness that cannot be deterred by present circumstances. This type of joy comes from God alone. It is an eager anticipation about wonderful things to come. The shepherds experienced this as they ran to Bethlehem to see Jesus.

Luke 2:8-12

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Romans 15:13

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 15:10-11

¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Romans 12:11-12

¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Psalm 51:12

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Advent Week 3 Prayer-Joy

Heavenly Father,

This third week of Advent let us remember that the good news of Jesus' birth has the power to bring us great joy this Christmas season. Our joy isn't dependent on what is going on in our life, in our world, or the people that we are with. It doesn't depend on the gifts we give or the gifts we find under the tree. No earthly thing can ever give us complete joy. Our joy comes from you. That joy that flooded the hearts of the shepherds, the angels, the wise men, the hosts of heaven, and Mary and Joseph is the joy that still has the power to overwhelm our hearts with rejoicing. Those who gathered around the new baby were blessed because they believed that you had fulfilled your promises. Mary and Joseph believed and were able to feel the joy of holding baby Jesus in their arms. The shepherds and wise men believed the angels and the signs and experienced the great gladness of worshipping their Messiah. Those who knew Him and recognized Him were overjoyed at the coming of Jesus. They saw the prophecies fulfilled and their fear was replaced with happiness as they gazed on the face of the one who would be their Savior. They trusted in your promises and their hearts were filled with gladness as they watched your loving-kindness manifested in the face of a tiny baby in a lowly manger. Father, you offer that same joy to us now if we know you and recognize and confess Jesus as our Savior and Lord. You gave us a reason to celebrate when you gave us the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ. You came to dwell among us. You went to Calvary's cross for us. You overcame death and rose from the dead for us. You forgive our sins and give us eternal life when we believe in you. Our joy doesn't come from our jobs, our family, our relationships, our finances, or our earthly success. Our joy doesn't come from what we have on earth or who we are with. Our joy is a gift. It is the gift that you gave us that first Christmas in Jesus Christ. Our joy is encompassed in our Savior, King Jesus. Flood our heart with joy this Advent season as we reflect on the good news of Jesus' birth. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen

Group discussion questions:

Is joy a natural expression of your personality? If so, why is it easy for you? If not, why is it a challenge for you?

Are the holidays challenging time for you? If so, why?

When have you experienced joy undeterred by present circumstance?

Reread John 15:10-11 from the passages above. What does this passage say about the source of joy?

Reread Psalm 51:12 from the passages above. How does this mesh with John 15:10-11 and what does it tell you about joy?

Addendum 1

Observing Advent at Home

You can use the 222 study guides to observe the four weeks of Advent at home. Use the Scripture readings as listed and the weekly Advent prayer, or adjust them as needed along the same weekly focus.

You will probably want to add the traditional Advent candles to your observance. There are usually four or five advent candles, although some traditions light a candle for every day December 1-25. Typically one candle is lit on the first Sunday, two are lit on the second Sunday, three are lit on the third Sunday, and four are lit on the fourth Sunday. All five are lit on Christmas day. The candles are arranged in a circle, with the Christ candle in the center. The candles can be tapers or pillars. If you mix them, at least the Christ candle should be the tallest/largest. Jesus is the light of the world and we light Advent candles to signify this. It's also a way to build anticipation for the celebration of the first coming of Jesus. The closer one gets to Christmas, the more the candles get lit, and the brighter it shines. Advent moves us through the prophecies about Christ, to the hope he provides, to the joy he brings, and the love he gives. As we move through each week, the candles glow more brightly with significance.

The traditional candle colors are:

First Advent Candle: The first purple candle symbolizes hope. Also known as the "Prophecy Candle" in memory of the prophets, particularly Isaiah, who prophesied the birth of Christ. It symbolizes the anticipation felt in awaiting the coming Messiah.

Second Advent Candle: The second purple candle symbolizes faith. Also known as the "Bethlehem Candle," signifies Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

Third Advent Candle: The third candle is ordinarily pink and represents joy. This candle is pink because the rose color represents joy, also known as the "Shepherd's Candle." The third Sunday of Advent is meant to remind us of the world's joy at the birth of Jesus and that believers have arrived at the midpoint of Advent.

Fourth Advent Candle: The final purple candle marks the last week of Advent as we anticipate the birth of our Savior. This final candle, also known as the “Angel’s Candle,” signifies peace. It reminds us of the angels' message: “Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men” (Luke 2:14).

Fifth Advent Candle (if used): A fifth white candle is placed in the center and is lit on Christmas Day to celebrate Jesus’ birth.

Prayers for Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles

Observing Advent at home gives all your family an opportunity to take part in the observance together. A traditional prayer for lighting the Advent wreath candles follows. Feel free to modify your prayers focusing on the weekly theme.

First Week (Hope): "O God, as we light the first candle of this Advent wreath, we open our hearts in hope. May the light of this candle remind us of the hope we have in you. May it inspire us to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ, our hope and our Savior. Amen."

Second Week (Peace): "Gracious God, as we light the second candle of this Advent wreath, we seek your peace. In a world filled with turmoil, may the light of this candle remind us of the peace that only you can bring. Help us to be instruments of your peace in our homes, communities, and the world. Amen."

Third Week (Joy): "Loving God, as we light the third candle of this Advent wreath, we rejoice in your presence. May the light of this candle fill our hearts with the joy of your salvation. Help us to share this joy with others, spreading your love and happiness to all we encounter. Amen."

Fourth Week (Love): "Heavenly Father, as we light the fourth candle of this Advent wreath, we are reminded of your boundless love. May the light of this candle shine forth as a symbol of the love you have shown us through your Son, Jesus Christ. Fill our hearts with your love, and help us to love one another as you have loved us. Amen."

Christmas Day (Christ’s birthday): “This Christmas, Jesus, come to the manger of my heart. Break into my world like you did at Bethlehem, bringing peace to every part. Dwell within and around me, as I unwrap Your presence each day. Keep me

close to You, Lord. Keep alive in me the desire for Your return. It's in Your wonderful Name I pray. Amen”

May you be blessed this holiday season as you prepare your heart for Christmas!

CALENDAR AT A GLANCE



MINISTRIES

DECEMBER

15	YOUTH LOCKIN	YOU
20	LORD'S SUPPER BAPTISM POTLUCK	222
24	CHRISTMAS EVE service 930,11am & 4:45pm	PJM
25	CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSED	
2024 JANUARY		
1	NEW YEARS DAY OFFICE CLOSED	
11	CELEBRATE RECOVERY BEGINS	FAM
7	Discovering Everyday Course 7th, 14th, 21st	222
21	CIB appreciation luncheon SUNDAY afternoon	FAM
24	Family Meeting & Potluck WEDNESDAY	PJM
26	D-NOW YOUTH 26-28th here at ECF!	YOU
28	MINISTRY FAIR - GET CONNECTED	222

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REOCCURRING

	MONDAY LADIES BIBLE STUDY 930AM (DTBD)	LAD
	MONDAY BASKETBALL 730PM	YOU
	2ND MON SEW MUCH LOVE 1030AM-1230PM	LAD
	TUESDAY SENIOR BIBLE STUDY WEEKLY 10AM-12PM	SEN
	2ND TUESDAY SENIOR LUNCHEON 11AM-1PM	SEN
	TUESDAY MENS BIBLE STUDY WEEKLY 6PM	MEN
	TUESDAY LADENS BIBLE STUDY WEEKLY 6PM	LAD
	WEDNESDAY 222 Adults, Youth & Kids 630-815PM	222
	SATURDAY SERVICE 500PM	PJM
	SATURDAY Griefshare.org 11-1pm 13week 8/12 - 11/4	FAM
	SATURDAY MENTOR TRAINING 11/4/23	222
	SUNDAY SERVICE 930 & 11AM	PJM
	SUNDAY CHILDRENS MINISTRY 930AM & 11AM	ie
	1ST SUNDAY G-FORCE STORE 930AM & 11AM	CHI
	LAST SUNDAY YOUTH FELLOWSHIP 12:30-2:30	CHI
	SUNDAY DISCOVERING EVERYDAY 4WK BI-MONTHLY	222
	SUNDAY DISCIPLESHIP 4WK COURSES BI-MONTHLY	222
	SUNDAY YOUTH BIBLE STUDY 11AM SEE KIM BECK	YOU



EMAIL SIGN UP
FOR THE WEEKLY EMAIL SO
YOU DON'T MISS ANY

12/13/2023