

Advent Joy

Sermon December 12, 2021 - Third Sunday in Advent

Golden verse: *“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.”* 1 Peter 1:8

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is a joy for me to celebrate with you the third Advent Sunday which is dedicated to JOY. It is such a joyful occasion to wait with you, singing and praying together to our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The Advent Season is a glorious season of the year. It is wonderful, joyful, exciting and also a busy time for most of us. I pray that we may not become caught up in the pressures of the season and that we would not place our emphasis on the wrong commercialized world which cannot bring us real joy. Let us open our hearts so the Holy Spirit may fill us with Advent then Christmas joy to celebrate the birth of the Holy One of Bethlehem.

The Lexham Theological Workbook defines joy as “the sense or state of gladness or elation that people experience through their relationship with God and through good things in their lives.”

Christian joy is more a state of being, than an emotion. It is the result of God’s actions followed by our actions in thankfulness. Real strength and joy are found in God’s presence. Jesus found great joy in his relationship with the Father and promises to give joy to His people. Christian joy is the result of a right relationship with God.

Also, joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is not something we can create by our own efforts. In Christ, we can experience joy that is abundant, exceeding, unspeakable, and secure.

Although joy can naturally arise from happy circumstances, there are many reasons for Christians to rejoice, even when life is full of suffering and difficulty.

- We rejoice because God has delivered us from sin.
- We rejoice because God is good, and right, and just.
- We rejoice because God invites us to be in His family.

Every day, our loving Heavenly Father is doing something specific in our lives and He is doing what is best for us by helping us to respond with genuine joy.

Finding the real joy of Advent and Christmas comes not in the hurrying and the scurrying to get more done.

The real joy of Christmas comes from above when we make the Saviour the focus of the season.

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He lived for us, and He died for us. What can we give in return to Him?

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part,
Yet what can I give Him? Give my heart.*

(In the Bleak Midwinter by Christina Rossetti, © Public Domain)

Dear beloved, if we want to make our Saviour Jesus Christ happy, whose birthday we celebrate, we should fulfill His desire in the way we celebrate. The Lord is asking us to reflect his love in this world with our words and actions. We should think of those who have much less than we have.

Giving in His name will make people joyous and our Lord will be very happy with us, and he will praise us for fulfilling His desire in this world.

When we give, we are rejoicing because we can give. When we give, we feel more kindly one to another. If we want to be filled with joy, we have to reach out in love to help those who have much less. And now, here, think again about the people of Cuba. When we give, we feel the joy filling us up from above, and that way our hearts are more softened. These days, let us be more interested in people than in things. Let us be more interested in giving than in receiving.

“True happiness comes only by making others happy.” David O. McKay

The Christmas spirit is the Christ spirit that makes our hearts joyful, glow love and friendship, and prompts us to kind deeds of service.

If we want to feel the Christmas joy, let us give as the Saviour gave Himself to us. The real gift is to give ourselves as our Saviour gave Himself to us and for us.

We should also consider giving gifts that have eternal value. We should give gifts of understanding and compassion, of service and friendship, of kindness and gentleness.

These days, as the wise men did, may we seek a special bright star to guide us in our celebration of the Saviour's birth. May we all make the journey to Bethlehem in spirit, taking with us a tender, caring heart as our gift to the Saviour.

Let us pray that we all may have a joy-filled Christmas in the sacred name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.