

WEEK 3: JOY

DEVOTIONALS FOR ADVENT

FEATURING UNION BAPTIST CHURCH ASSOCIATE MINISTERS



DECEMBER 11

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:39-56

written by Dr. Robert James

As Mary was making her way to visit Elizabeth that day, she traveled almost 80 miles with an exciting story to share with her. Mary recently had an encounter with an angel who told her that she was going to have a child. Not only was she going to have a child, but her child would be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

So as Mary processed this recent and miraculous news from the Angel, she entered the door of Elizabeth's home with confusion and wonder. She wondered how Elizabeth would react to her recent discovery. She wondered if she would believe the story of her recent supernatural encounter.

Mary knocked on the door and began to greet Elizabeth who was waiting by the door. As Mary opened her mouth to say hello. Suddenly something began to happen to Elizabeth. The baby Elizabeth was carrying began to leap inside of her. Now as the baby leaped with Joy, the scriptures tell us that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. The news Mary shared was so great that it cause an instant change in Elizabeth's current circumstances.

JOY

Today, for our devotional moment, let's take some time to focus on all the things God has done for you and your family this season. Let's focus on all the ways God has provided for you and protected you this season. Let's focus on how good God has been in your life.

Now that you have your personal encounter with God in mind. Let's take some time and write down a list of people that you know who would benefit from you sharing your testimony. Who are around you can you encourage this season who may need to have an encounter with the Joy of the lord. Who around you need to hear your story?

Today, Let's pray that God opens an opportunity for you to share the Joy of the Lord with someone else. Let's pray that your story brings a change to someone else's life.



**PRAYER FOR TODAY: LORD, THANK YOU FOR THE JOY YOU HAVE GIVEN US.
PLEASE GIVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE YOUR JOY WITH SOMEONE ELSE.**

DECEMBER 12

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 2:1-12

written by Rev. Evelyn Holt-Fuller

For centuries, prophecies had spread about a coming Messiah (deliverer, savior). Some thought he would be a warrior who would free them from Roman rule. Knowing that God would keep God's promise, they waited in joyful anticipation of that day.

Matthew 2:1-12 tells of the Magi from the East (likely from Media, Persia, and surrounding areas). They were scholarly priests, gifted in math, astronomy, medicine, astrology, etc. They diligently searched the heavens for signs of the Messiah's coming, and when the star appeared, they followed it. When they found Jesus, they presented Him with their gifts: gold (a symbol of kingship), frankincense (a symbol of deity), and myrrh (an embalming oil). In this one act they acknowledged Jesus's kingship, His Lordship, and foretold the sacrifice that He would make on our behalf. God had a plan.

After they experienced the joy of seeing the Messiah, they worshipped Him and departed to their own country by another route (to avoid Herod's treachery). When we experience the joy of meeting Jesus, we also leave differently from when we came. Jesus fulfills our joy.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF YOUR SON AND THE JOY THAT HE GIVES. HELP ME TO SERVE YOU WITH MY BEST TO EXPRESS MY GRATEFULNESS FOR YOUR GIFT.

DECEMBER 13

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE: PSALM 94:18-19

For many, Christmas is a stressful time. From having extra gatherings to attend to meals to prepare to the strain of selecting the perfect gift for those we love, it can become overwhelming. Hopefully, spending time concentrating on the hope and peace that Christ gives has brought you joy this advent.

It's not a cliché to say Jesus is the reason for this season. When you or those around you have anxiety about Christmas preparations, take time to slow down and remember the joy of Christmas.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Let's pause to consider Emmanuel, God is with us.
- Read the following scripture out loud: Isaiah 9:6, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
- Now let's be reminded and filled with the consoling comfort of our Lord that brings us great joy.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: EVERLASTING FATHER, FOCUS MY EYES AND MY HEART OF YOU. LET YOUR JOY BE MY STRENGTH.

DECEMBER 14

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 40:3-8

written by Rev. Evelyn Holt-Fuller

Verses 1 and 2 of Isaiah 40 open with this prophetic reassurance: "Be comforted my people, for your sad days are over. Your sins have been paid for." Then, Isaiah prophesies that John would be "a voice of one calling in the wilderness." (Is. 40:3; Jn. 1:23)

What should people do? They should prepare the way for their soon-coming King. (v. 3) No more valleys, or hills, or rough places. When Jesus comes, the glory of the Lord is revealed. (vv. 4&5)

During Advent we prepare for the celebration of our Lord's birth. We see people change as Christmas draws nearer. And it's not the commercialization of Christmas that brings this change. There is a spiritual, supernatural shift in the atmosphere. People think less of what they don't have and more of their blessings. We share more with others. We give more. We seek peace with our fellow human beings.

In doing so, aren't we smoothing out the rough places in others' lives? Aren't we lifting those who are in the valleys? Don't we straighten out the crooked places by helping those who are on a destructive path? We freely share with others what has been given to us: the Holy Spirit. John said in Mark 1:8: "I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."!

We have joy because Christ came, Christ died, Christ rose, and Christ is coming again!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: FAITHFUL GOD, THANK YOU FOR CALLING US TO JOIN YOU IN THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS. SEND ME OUT TO BE THE GOOD NEWS FOR SOMEONE I MEET TODAY. IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

DECEMBER 15

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE: PSALM 16:1-11

When we ask our smartphones for directions, it presents us with different options. Tolls or no tolls? Highway or the local route? The map will often show us the shortest route and give us an option to take a longer route if we want to. It would be great if the choices and options in our life came with such clear background information.

As we move through the Season of Advent and prepare to enter a new year, we can keep this truth in mind: God will show us the way (v.11). In verse 2, the psalmist affirms that the best way is the way that keeps us close to God---“...I have no good apart from you.”

So, where are you going? Which path are you going to take? Before you decide to take a shortcut, remember that real joy is found in God's presence. The pleasure that does not come with the hangover of remorse is found when we remain close to God's right hand.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY: LORD, GIVE ME THE WISDOM TO CHOOSE THE PATH OF LIFE.
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**

DECEMBER 16

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE: JOHN 15:1-11

In the verses before John 15:11, Jesus tells his disciples to remain in God's love so His joy would be in them. This joy was for his disciples then, and it applies to believers today. Jesus wants us to have his joy on the inside of us. A joy that overflows because God is in control.

When you remain connected to God, you are made whole and complete. This same connection can be felt when we are with our family and friends who love God and love us. There is joy in being connected to God. A joy grounded in thankfulness and gratitude.

Remember that Jesus came to us during this Advent season to demonstrate God's love. A love that wants us to remain connected to the only one who can give us joy.

So today, ask God to provide you the satisfaction that only He can give, so your joy will be complete.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: JESUS, THANK YOU FOR COMING INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE US AND SHOW US HOW TO LIVE. HELP ME TO OBEDIENTLY FOLLOW YOUR LEAD. FILL ME WITH YOUR JOY SO THAT I CAN FACE EACH DAY WITH RENEWED STRENGTH.

DECEMBER 17

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:1-5,14

written by Rev. Angela Taylor

Did you know we are not just remembering Advent? We are also experiencing Advent, the expectation that Christ is coming as ruler, judge, and Savior. In this first Advent we await with great expectation the birth of Jesus, an event in the past. John 1:1-5, 14 shows Jesus the babe is also the begotten Son of the Father!

For Christians around the world, Christ's coming as a babe is a joyful event, full of awe and wonder. But in this second Advent, we aren't waiting for a helpless newborn. In this future Advent, we wait for an all-powerful Christ, who will rule and judge and transform the world. Oh, what joy to be transformed as new creatures in the new heaven and the new earth. May the expectation of both Christ the child and Christ the King rejuvenate your awe and wonder this season.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

During this Advent Season, let's remember that God's joy transforms and regenerates. God's joy is an unshakable awareness that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Today, let's think about how you have been transformed by God's joy. Let's spend time reflecting on how God's joy brought you strength.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: GOD, I PRAY THAT I HAVE AN ABUNDANCE OF JOY, SO MUCH SO THAT IT SPILLS OVER INTO EVERY RELATIONSHIP, CIRCUMSTANCE, AND PERSON TO WHOM I'M CONNECTED. MAY YOUR JOY RADIATE FROM ME AND FILL THE ATMOSPHERE DURING THIS ADVENT SEASON. IN JESUS' NAME, I PRAY, AMEN.