

3.1 Joy Devotion



S A Y Jesus is the Joy of our Salvation, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope, promise of peace, and joy of salvation he brought to a lost and broken world.

A S K What is joy?

E X P L A I N Joy is a feeling of great happiness. It's pure bliss. It's overwhelming gladness bubbling up in your soul.

L I G H T the first, second, and third candles of your wreath.

S A Y These candles represent hope, peace, and joy. When Jesus came, he brought joy to our hearts.

R E A D & D I S C U S S Isaiah 9:3-4 and Luke 2:8-14

P R A Y O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring us salvation and restore our joy. We rejoice because he came to live with us and in us and through us. May the good news of great joy of Jesus' coming be ever on our lips. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

F U R T H E R D I S C U S S I O N What brings you joy? What part of the Christmas story makes you most glad? What are some ways that our family can bring joy to others this Christmas?

3.2 Advent Conspiracy

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Luke 2:13–14

Words are powerful. No doubt we can think upon words that we have offered and received that have brought us delight and affirmation; words that we might still cherish to this day. We hold too, with gentleness and the peace of Christ, words that we know have brought destruction and anguish for us and others.

The words shared in this passage, announced by these heavenly host, are words of wonder and witness. They give fitting glory to God and witness of the peace on earth that would be upon those on whom God’s favor would rest.

These words of wonder and witness play their part in what was taking place and are nestled amongst what was unfolding for these unlikely characters: the shepherds living out in the fields. Their initial terror at the encounter with the Angel of the Lord was suddenly transformed as good news was proclaimed and this awe-filled set of events would evoke action: they set out to go to Bethlehem.

These powerful words of wonder and witness play an incredible part in what took place in that field. Words spoken, and the positive impact they have, are likely to be cherished long after the memories of whatever ‘*must have*’ gift have faded. How true this is when we join with these heavenly hosts in speaking words of wonder and witness. During this Advent season we have the opportunity to be a part of echoing a story that compliments that of the shepherds where good news is shared with those that we meet, wonder and witness is announced by God’s children and out of this yet more people come to seek out Christ.

Reflect

Think about the words you have used in the last few days. Are they ones that brought joy, peace, and encouragement to the people you encountered? Did you have any opportunities to share or be a witness of the gospel?

Pray

LORD,

We thank you for the power and wonder of these words shared by the heavenly host and all that they witness too. Might we ever be captivated by this unfolding story of good news. Put upon my lips words that are powerful, precious and peace bringing. Minister to me, by your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

3.3 Wycliff (Shepherds)

SHEPHERDS

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them... And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

— Luke 2:15-18, 20 (ESV)

Imagine being on a remote beach in the middle of the night.

Walking along the soft, cool sand of the beach, your eyes might need time to adjust to the darkness around you. There are no streetlights, no lamps, no flashlights around. But then you look at the sky and stand in awe, mesmerized by the beauty and clarity of the numerous stars. Because there’s no artificial light to detract from them, these stars seem brighter and clearer than you’ve ever seen them.

Sometimes it takes being in total darkness to see the light that’s been around us the whole time. What had been distant is now startlingly clear. Now imagine the shepherds standing in total darkness the night that the angel came to them. They were probably yawning, scanning the dark horizon for predators that could attack their flocks. Their eyes, too, had adjusted to pitch blackness with only the night sky as their source of light.

Scripture says that when an angel appeared, “the glory of the Lord shone around [the shepherds]” (Luke 2:9b, NIV). Instantly, the shepherds were terrified. Between the angels themselves and the brilliant light of God’s glory, it’s understandable.

Typically these “outsiders” were kept away from society, but now they were suddenly in the spotlight. They were seen. They probably never expected the news of the Messiah’s birth to come to them or that God would use shepherds to declare the arrival of the Lamb of God.

God spoke to unlikely people: to a lowly virgin girl, to her tradesman betrothed, to lowly shepherds. These unlikely people were to become his messengers in the most unexpected ways.

Years later, more unlikely people — women — were chosen to deliver the news that Jesus had been resurrected. You might feel like an unlikely candidate, but God can use you to declare the Savior this Christmas season! He can use you to bring light that breaks through a weary, dark world.

Questions

- » When was the last time you received good news? Who delivered the news to you?
- » If you were a townspeople and received the news of Jesus’ birth from a shepherd, how would you have responded?
- » God uses unlikely people to bring about his kingdom on earth. How can that fact encourage you this week?

3.4 Frontier Fellowship

SEE

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

James 1:17

Whether we are anticipating giving or receiving, we become like children again, eager and joyful, when we see the colorful array of Christmas gifts under the tree. Bright wrappings and shiny ribbons attract our attention, no matter our age. But, unlike children, we also know most gifts bring only temporary satisfaction; few will last a lifetime or bring long-term joy. The children will outgrow the clothes and toys, the grandparents will wear out the slippers, mom will again need new tea towels, and dad will realize he needs a totally different tool.

Only God’s gifts are lasting and perfect. Only He knows and provides what we truly need now and for the future. The ultimate gift of His Son demonstrates His care, concern, unending generosity and grace.

We live in an uncertain and changing world. While many live in stability, all around the world refugees are struggling for survival.

Frontier Fellowship partners with several ministries serving refugees. Students are obtaining secondary school degrees through the Afghan Refugee Academy in South Asia, and Afghan refugee families are finding stability amidst tumultuous times. In refugee camps in South Asia, the Empowering Rohingya Women project helps at-risk women and girls from this marginalized people group. Through this project, they obtain much-needed care and supplies and hear the Good News. Pray that refugees and displaced peoples worldwide will find their home in Christ and know His love. And pray for those who minister to them, for their safety and for the right words to communicate about the gifts offered by our loving, unchanging God.

3.5 Advent Conspiracy Family (Give More)

GIVE MORE

WE'LL GIVE MORE OF OURSELVES AND SPEND TIME WITH THE PEOPLE WE LOVE.

God gave us the gift of his son, Jesus, on the first Christmas. Just like God did with us, we want our friends and family to know how much we love them at Christmastime. We can do this by giving more of ourselves by making special homemade gifts, planning fun activities, and making new Christmas traditions.

SCRIPTURE:

“For God so loved the world that He gave us His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, I want to make new special memories this Christmas with my friends and family. Thank you for loving me and being my special gift from God. Amen.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- *What is one activity you would like our family to do together before Christmas?
- *How does it make you feel when you give someone a special gift?
- *What's your favorite Christmas tradition?
- *What are some ways we can give more of ourselves?
- *What's something we can pray for this week?

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Coupon Booklet. Make a special coupon book for friends and family. Print off the coupons or create your own. Remind your kids that these gifts are special because it came from their heart

Storytime. Parents, share a story with your kids about your favorite Christmas tradition growing up. Why was this such a special memory to you? Who were the people you shared this tradition with?

Make Something. Get a plain glass or plastic ornament/bauble. On tiny strips of paper write out special memories that happened over the last year. Roll them up and put them inside the glass. Hang up the special decoration on your tree and add to it every year.