

Willingly Waiting: Waiting with Joy – Isaiah 12:1-6

I do not often tell stories about my kids from the pulpit and there's a reason for that. We have a deal with them that if dad uses them for an illustration, dad owes them money. Well, I'm going to pay up this morning because I just can't think of any better way to describe joy to you than what I experienced with my youngest Grey this fall.

Grey is 9 and he's our daredevil. For his birthday this September he really wanted to go to Cedar Point and ride the roller coasters. Keep in mind, dude has never really been on a coaster before, but he wanted to go. So, Bethany and I pulled him out of school for the day and drove to Ohio with him and he loved it instantly. But of course, we didn't put him on the biggest one's to start but soon enough he was begging to go on Millennium Force. If you aren't familiar, this coaster has a 300 foot first drop at a 80-degree angle and you go over 90 mph. Bethany happily let Grey and I go on it.

We waited the 45 minutes in line and got into the car and started going up the first hill, which is at quite an incline. All of a sudden, the train stopped and we were stuck on the hill quite high up in the air, leaning backward in our seats. Grey was thrilled with the whole situation, I was not. After about 20 minutes of this, they finally got us going again and we made our way up the first hill and went over the top. When I say a 300-foot drop going 90mph I am dead serious. Near the bottom of the hill I looked over at Grey to see how he was doing, you know, because he's 9 and has just got stuck on this thing. I don't think I've seen a look of pure joy and ecstasy like what I saw on his face. His mouth was wide open with a smile of delight.

When we finished the ride, they asked our train if we wanted to stay on and go again because of getting stuck. Grey was pumped and so we went again and I spent the next day steadying myself with my brain attempting to find equilibrium. It was pure joy for him.

Even if Roller Coasters aren't your thing, I'm sure you've had moments of joy like that in your life. God has designed us to find delight in everyday experiences and

unique moments. Joy is one of the most frequently mentioned emotions in the Bible and this is because of what one author said, *“Christianity is a unique religion of joy.”* – Jurgen Moltmann

While this is true, joy is often a struggle in this world because of the brokenness around us. We have moments of joy, but then it eludes us. This is because, as we’ve said during this Christmas series, we are living in between. We have joy now, but we are also waiting for full and final joy in the future. And once again we want to explore how to pull that future joy into the present and wait with joy. So, on this third Sunday of Advent, let’s talk about waiting with joy. **2 Keys to Waiting with Joy.**

1. Perceive Why We Wait with Joy

In the Old Testament, joy mainly comes from two places, which are linked together. First, joy comes from the presence of God as we come to know God’s character. To be close to God is to experience joy. Listen to Psalm 16:11. This is because God is a joyful God. I don’t know if you have ever thought of God this way, but it’s fundamentally true. And to draw close to God and to know Him as He is to delight in His joy.

But second, joy comes from God’s actions, especially His work of deliverance and salvation. In the Old Testament this can be deliverance from Egypt, from exile, or even personal deliverance from sin. Listen to Psalm 51:8, 12 and then Isaiah 35:10.

The pattern in the OT is that Israel joyfully receives God’s salvation and deliverance and then plunges right back into rebellion against God again. Because of this the OT prophets look ahead to God’s full deliverance through God’s Messiah and tell the people to wait for this deliverance with joy because they will experience complete joy when Messiah comes. We saw this last week in Isaiah 9:3. But it’s a continual theme in Isaiah. To speak of Messiah’s coming is to speak of God’s salvation and the joy that comes with it. Turn over to Isaiah 11.

Now, before we read this, I want to make sure you understand how the OT prophets are meant to be read. People often find them confusing and one reason

is that they didn't write in a linear fashion like Paul does in his letters. If you think of Paul's letters as a single speaker, the prophets are surround sound. They approach a topic from one angle, then approach the same topic from a different perspective, and then another. It feels like they are repetitive and that's because they sort of are. Isaiah 11 covers the same ground as Isaiah 9 but with a new twist. Listen to Isaiah 11:1-9. The coming of God's King in the line of David is promised and then Isaiah 12 anticipates the joy that will come with His salvation. Isaiah 12:1-6.

Well, what do we find when we get to the NT and the arrival of Jesus as the Promised Davidic King? Pronouncements of joy over and over again. Luke 1:46-47 & 2:10. OT Israel waited for Messiah to arrive with joy and now we look back on his arrival with joy and anticipate His future return with joy. This is why hope is tied to joy. Listen to Romans 12:12.

So, why do we wait with joy? Because Messiah has come and is coming. And so now we learn to live with joy in the present. And this is our second key to waiting with joy.

2. Practice Ways to Wait with Joy

I want to give you three ways to wait with joy. Of course there are more, but we will focus on these three.

- **Wait with Joy in Suffering**

This is where it gets challenging. The hope of Christ's return and the joy over eternal salvation bump up against the difficulties of this life. But it's quite possible and even expected in Scripture that we can find joy in suffering. Listen to Paul in Colossians 1:24. I think there's a principle here that can help us find joy when things aren't going particularly well. Notice how Paul finds joy in his sufferings for their sake and for the sake of the church. Now listen to 2 Cor. 7:4-7. Same thing.

Suffering and difficulty tend to turn us in on ourselves. A suffering person thinks about himself or herself. This only compounds the difficulty present. Joy turns a person out toward God and others and provides strength. Joy can very much be present in times of great affliction. And maybe you have had this experience

before of more intense joy in times of trial because you are looking past the difficulty in hope and trusting in God to guide and move. You are concerned for others and put your own experience on the back burner. When your attention is focused outward on God and others, joy results even when times are tough.

- Wait with Joy in Community

The church is the place where our joy is built up and where we are express our joy in praise to God and encouragement to others. This is because the body of Christ is the place of shared hope in Christ. One author put it this way:

"Upon experiencing joy, people's first reaction is typically the desire to communicate the good news with someone else and to celebrate with others." – Zoltan Dornyei

Part of our shared experience at church is to let the Word of God compel us to joy and then to respond to the truth by praising God together. We celebrate together. And then in our relationships with one another we find comfort and joy as we live in between together. Listen to 1 Cor. 12:21-26.

As you wait for Christ to come, the church is a vital component of waiting with joy.

- Wait with Joy as a Defining Feature of Your Life

I'm reading a book right now about the 1929 stock market crash that ultimately led to the Great Depression. The whole thing came to a head in October of 1929 and so many individuals, banks, and companies lost billions in the span of about a week. The market had been riding high for years and people were betting that it would just keep going up. A man named Jesse Livermore was a longtime trader and was wary of the increasing highs of the market. His favorite book was titled *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, and he suspected that the market would reverse course. Because of this he shorted the market, which was the opposite of what everyone else was doing. Because of this he made over \$100 million in one day, the day everyone else was losing billions.

I tell his story because we live in a culture where the crowds are constantly pursuing joy in all the wrong places. We are a bored and shallow culture and so

many people neglect the only place to find true and lasting joy for cheap imitations. We scroll and watch and buy and lust and gamble and medicate and keep imagining that around the next corner we will find lasting joy. The crowds are chasing the bubble of temporary fun. But as we've already seen this morning the pursuit of joy must be centered on the God of Joy and the salvation He promises. C.S. Lewis said it like this:

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." - C.S. Lewis

Wait with joy by making the pursuit of joy in Christ the ambition of your life. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22. Paul tells us in Philippians 4:4 to rejoice always and then repeats that command. Joy can and should be the reality for anyone who knows Jesus Christ and who hopes in His return. There are brief moments of joy in this life, as I described to you with Grey's experience on the roller coaster.

But deep and profound joy, joy that protects during pain and loss, and joy that lasts, comes from elsewhere. It comes from God's work in me and fellowship with Him.

"The distinction between joy and fun is as great as the distinction between joy and a gamble of chance, or between a meaningful life and a lottery win. Joy is enduring and puts its mark on one's attitude to living. Fun is short-term and serves amusement. True joy is only possible with one's whole heart, whole soul, and all one's energies. The feeling about life that underlies the party-making fun society is, I suspect, more boredom with life than true joy. True joy opens the soul, is a flow of spirits, giving our existence a certain easiness. We may have fun, but we are in joy. In true joy, the ecstatic nature of human existence comes to expression. We are created for joy. We are born for joy." – Jurgen Moltmann

Yes we are. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions – 12/14/25

- Can you describe a moment when you experienced pure joy?
- What makes Christianity a “unique religion of joy”?
- What are the two places in the OT that provide the foundation for joy?
- Why is the coming of Messiah associated with joy for Israel?
- What are some ways we can learn to cultivate joy in the middle of suffering?
- Why does suffering tend to turn us inward toward self?
- In what ways is the church a place of joy for you?
- What are some common places that people look for joy today?
- What are some places that you are tempted to find joy other than Christ?
- In what ways is our culture bored and shallow?
- How can you develop lasting joy as a fruit of the Spirit?

- What is the biggest hindrance to regular joy in your life?