

# Advent Joy



Joy to the World

**Williamsburg Christian Church**  
Advent Study – Week 3

## Advent Joy – Joy to the World

"I guess you were right, Linus. I shouldn't have picked this little tree," said Charlie Brown. "Everything I do turns into a disaster. I guess I don't really know what Christmas is all about. Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"

"Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about," said Linus. [Linus walks to center stage.]

"Lights, please."



**And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this [shall be] a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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, good will toward men.**

That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of **great joy**, which shall be to **all people**.

I don't know about you, but I really think joy is the main thing I take away from the Christmas season. Why joy, you ask? Well, I just can't escape the feeling that I have been given the world's greatest present. I really don't deserve it, I don't really understand it yet, and if I don't take exceptionally good care of it, it might get taken away from me. Ok, maybe not taken away, but if I don't make the utmost effort to care of this gift it could easily get lost and I wouldn't have it to share with you later. And this does, it gives me great joy. Not the jumping up and down, can't stop smiling, making

people wonder what's wrong with me kind of joy, but a quite still small voice of reason and knowledge that makes my little light shine kind of joy. Joy can be described as a quick feeling of happiness or elation, but I live into the idea that joy for Christians looks more like the definition given here. Theopedia tells us that joy is a state of mind and an orientation of the heart. It is a settled state of satisfaction and contentment, confidence and hope. It is something or someone that provides a source of happiness.

Joy appears 171 times in the Old Testament in 22 books; 71 times in the New Testament in 18 books (HCSB).

Our joy is in Christ and in knowing Him, His story, and His commands for us. Joy is a satisfied state of mind that takes pleasure in the loving reign of King Jesus over our lives and turns our hearts away from fear and to the One who says, "Do not fear for I am with you." Joy is a settled state of satisfaction and contentment, confidence and hope, not in ourselves, but in the faithful love of God who reigns with compassion and grace. It is the settled assurance and quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright because God's kingdom, of which I am its citizen, will never falter or fail because Jesus is Lord. So, joy, more than some feeling of fleeting optimism, arises from the ashes of a world prone to anxiety, disappointment, and fear, and strengthens our feet to walk by faith trusting in the power and promised presence of Christ in our midst by the Spirit."

Isaiah tells us that we will have joy and gladness:

**Isaiah 35:10 - and the redeemed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing, crowned with unending joy. Joy and gladness will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee.**

Psalms tell us that our joy is in the forgiveness that we have been given and that the whole earth will shout for joy and sing:

**Psalm 32:1 - How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!**

**Psalm 96:12 - Let the fields and everything in them celebrate. Then all the trees of the forest will shout for joy**

**Psalm 98: 4 - Let the whole earth shout to the Lord; be jubilant, shout for joy, and sing.**

Zechariah shares with us the coming of the Lord and that we should shout for joy and be glad:

**Zechariah 2:10 - "Daughter Zion, shout for joy and be glad, for I am coming to dwell among you"—this is the Lord's declaration.**

Our joy is in the Lord and the fact that He loved us enough to leave His heavenly home and come to earth and live among us as an example. So, I believe, joy is the keynote of the entire Advent season, especially for the believer who realizes its spiritual significance.

***Joy to the world! the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heav'n and nature sing.***

***Joy to the earth the Savior reigns. Let men their songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy.***

***No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.***

***He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love.***

These words combine to create one of our most joyous, and maybe the most recognized Christmas hymn in existence, and yet, there is no mention of shepherds, angelic choruses, or wise men. Why is that, do you think? Still, "Joy to the World" truly emphasizes the joy that Christ's birth brought to mankind. During the dark and silent centuries, human hearts longed for God to reveal Himself. It had been 600 years since the last hearing of God's voice. Then, at long last it happened as "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Our God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, came into this world and provided a way by which we sinful and undeserving might find God again. The entire Advent season should be filled with rejoicing as we contemplate this great gift.

"Joy to the World" is a paraphrase of the last part of Psalm 98:

**Psalm 98  
Praise the King  
A psalm.**

**1 Sing a new song to the Lord, for he has performed wonders; his right hand and holy arm have won him victory.**

**2 The Lord has made his victory known; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.**

**3 He has remembered his love and faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen our God's victory.**

**4 Let the whole earth shout to the Lord; be jubilant, shout for joy, and sing.**

**5 Sing to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and melodious song.**

**6 With trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn shout triumphantly in the presence of the Lord, our King.**

**7 Let the sea and all that fills it, the world and those who live in it, resound.  
8 Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains shout together for joy  
9 before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world  
righteously and the peoples fairly.**

We sing this hymn at Christmas time to commemorate and remember that Christ came to earth and brought "Joy to the World." I want you to also see that this song clearly sings of Christ's second coming, thus, no mention of the things we normally associate with Christmas time. Our first indication of this is the word "is". Joy to the World the Lord "is" come. Not "has" come as some versions will change it to today. Secondly, we know that Christ wasn't received by the world at all. He was born in an animal's feeding trough in a small obscure town and the only visitors He had at that time were some shepherds that were told of the event and went to see for themselves. Then, after leaving Bethlehem, Christ and his family needed to go into exile to keep from being found by Herod and killed, hardly the reception that we expect to be attached to the world learning about the King of Kings. His coming again will be different. Verse three speaks of no more sorrows, and verse four speaks of Christ ruling the earth, and we are well aware that those items haven't come to pass yet, but we do expect them to happen.

So, why do we sing this song at Christmas? The lyrics clearly are telling the story of things to come, and things to which we will find joy in when they come to pass. I guess my thinking is that we wouldn't have the second coming of Jesus without the His first coming to earth in the form of a small baby, or, as Isaiah tells us in Chapter 9:

**For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us,  
and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

The hymn may speak of things to come, and the world may not notice that it does, just as the world missed the advent or "coming to" this earth of Jesus, but it still brings me joy and a hope for things to come. It truly is a gift and just as I have received, may I pass it along to you.

At the time of Jesus' birth all of Israel was looking for a mighty warrior to come deliver them from Rome and establish the nation. The baby of a peasant family was the furthest thing from their minds.

1. Read the accounts in Luke 2:17-18, 20, and 33 and discuss why some like Simeon and Anna's lives allowed them to see God's true Redeemer and King when others could not?

2. A sheep pasture seems like the last place one would expect an angelic announcement of the birth of the Redeemer and King. What do you think God's purpose was in announcing the birth of Christ to shepherds rather than the political or religious leaders of the day (1 Cor. 1:26-31)?
3. The angel announced, "Behold I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people." Why would the shepherds have felt such great joy at these words? How can we see that Jesus fulfilled this announcement?
4. What does the shepherds' initial reaction to the angel of the Lord tell you about God's glory (Luke 2:9)? Read the following verses to learn more about the glory of the Lord and what the shepherds might have witnessed that night: Exodus 33:18-23, 34:29-30; Revelation 21:23.

## **LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF JOY**

*As you light the candle of joy consider asking the following questions, one each night.*

*How can Jesus become the joy of the world?  
How can Jesus become the joy of our nation?  
How can Jesus become the joy of our neighborhood?  
How can Jesus become the joy of our friends?  
How can Jesus become the joy of our own lives?*

## **CONCLUDING MEDITATION**

"What is joy? Joy can never be induced, cranked up, or made to happen. It's something that has to find us precisely within our ordinary, duty-bound, burdened, full-of-worries, and pressured lives. This is joy: Imagine walking to your car or to the bus after a day's work, tired, needing some rest. But, just as you reach your car or the bus-stop, you fill with a sense of life and health; in some inchoate way, all jumbled together, you feel your body, mind, soul, gender, sexuality, history, place within a family, network of friends, city, and country, and this feeling makes you spontaneously exclaim: 'God, it's good to be alive!' That's joy.

And as C.S. Lewis puts it, it has to surprise you. You can't find joy, it has to find you. That's its real quality. You can go to a party and say, 'Tonight I'm going to have a good time, if it kills me!' It might! Indeed, parties and letting off steam have their place. You might even find good cheer at a party or find a good distraction and these can be needed therapy and a good respite from hard work. But neither is joy.

Joy is always the by-product of something else. As the various versions of The Prayer of St. Francis put it, we can never attain joy, consolation, peace, forgiveness, love, and

understanding by actively pursuing them. We attain them by giving them out. That's the great paradox at the center of all spirituality and one of the great foundational truths within the universe itself: The air that we breathe out is the air we will eventually breathe back in. Joy will come to us if we set about actively trying to create it for others.”<sup>1</sup>

## **PRAYER**

**Father, as we prepare our hearts and our minds for the celebration of your Son's birth, give us the joy that is expected of your people. Give us the desire to wait for You and to know Your love for us. Allow us to share that love and joy with those You seek to redeem and to see them as you do, as children loved and scooped up into the arms of Jesus ready to celebrate another birthday here on this earth. Thank you for grace and mercy in Christ's name, Amen.**

### **Sources Utilized:**

<https://americanliterature.com/author/anonymous/poem/the-true-meaning-of-christmas-recited-by-linus>

[https://hymnary.org/text/joy\\_to\\_the\\_world\\_the\\_lord\\_is\\_come](https://hymnary.org/text/joy_to_the_world_the_lord_is_come)

[https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=joy&qs\\_version=HCSB](https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=joy&qs_version=HCSB)

Advent Joy 2017 – Williamsburg Christian Church

Advent – New Life Fellowship, New York City, Pastor Rich Villodas

---

<sup>1</sup> **Ronald Rolheiser - O.M.I.**, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He received his doctorate at the University of Louvain, and is a member of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the Canadian Theological Society, and the Religious Studies Association of Alberta.