

THE HEART THAT GREW THREE SIZES

Grinch," by UMC pastor and author Matt Rawle.

Second Sunday of Advent - "When Christmas Isn't Christmas"

Devotionals for 5 – 11 December 2021

Get ready for our new sermon and study series for the season of advent!

Beginning November 28! We will be using the book, "The Heart That Grew Three Sizes – Finding Faith In The Story Of The

In this study, we will be examining the Dr. Seuss classic, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" and learning from the journey of the Grinch as he comes to understand that Christmas doesn't come from a store, but means a little bit more! Rediscover the gift of Advent that comes without packages, ribbons and bows. Come as we find Faith in the story of the Grinch.

The Third Sunday of Advent in 2021 will be on Sunday, December 12th. There is so much comfort to be found in the practice of pausing to read, pray, and reflect over the course of the Advent season in which believers eagerly anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth.

The Third Sunday of Advent gives us the opportunity to prepare in our hearts a sense of holy anticipation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus as well as for his promised second coming.

The third Sunday of Advent we are invited to reflect on the joy we have access to because of our faith in Jesus. One of the defining characteristics of Christ-followers is their joyful demeanor. Let's not allow the struggles of this year steal from the great joy we have because of Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-5 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."

Over this Advent season, would you pray that the joy of the Lord would be evident in your heart and home? May God's spirit transform the days leading up to Christmas into a time of holy anticipation; preparing our hearts, as we joyfully await the chance to celebrate the arrival of our king.

Advent season is an invitation to set your mind off the stresses of the year. We can take our focus off of the crazy hustle of the season and the sadness that could accompany the different ways some of us may be choosing to observe the holiday season this year. Even when things feel chaotic, we can find peace in Jesus. Advent is a chance to focus our thoughts on the gift God has given us in his son Jesus who stepped down from heaven and took the form of a man so that we might believe.

The tradition for the third Sunday of Advent includes lighting a third sometimes pink candle that is a symbol of joy. This third Sunday of Advent we read, pray, and reflect on the joy that God's plan gives us (foretold by the prophets and fulfilled by the life and death of Christ), and we meditate on the promise of Christ's coming glory-filled return.

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is the Latin word for rejoice, and this Sunday is the time for us to rejoice because Jesus came and died so that we may live forever with him!

Three Suggested Scripture Readings for the Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35:1-6

Even the wilderness and desert will be glad in those days. The wasteland will rejoice and blossom with spring crocuses. Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as

lovely as Mount Carmel or the plain of Sharon. There the Lord will display his glory, the splendor of our God. With this news, strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees. Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, and do not fear for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unplug the ears of the deaf. The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will sing for joy! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the wasteland.

Isaiah 35:10

Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.

Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?" Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor." And he added, "God blesses those who do not fall away because of me." As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. "What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, 'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you.' I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is the Latin word meaning "rejoice." This Sunday is so named because "Rejoice" is the first word in the entrance antiphon for today's Mass taken from Philippians 4:4,5: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice! The Lord is near." Some people mark this Sunday on their Advent wreath with a pink candle instead of a purple candle. This Sunday is a joyful reminder that our salvation is near.

The Unconquerable Gift of Joy

Happiness is an emotion that can disappear as quickly as it rises to the surface. Joy, however, is a choice.

We have a choice. God gives us a joy that is unconquerable. We can choose to live in an attitude of resentment, anger and fear or we can choose to pursue the joy of Christ. So what is the picture of joy in the Bible?

Joy is trusting when you want to doubt. - "Trust in the LORD forever, because in Yah, the LORD, is an everlasting rock!" (Isaiah 26:4). As Christ followers we aren't pressured to do it all for everyone. We trust in Jesus to do the heavy lifting. The key is trust. We just need to have Mary's response to the coming of Jesus, "'I am the Lord's slave,' said Mary. 'May it be done to me according to your word'" (Luke 1:38).

Joy is receiving what you want to reject. - Can you imagine how the innkeeper would have felt if he said to Mary and Joseph, "Of course you can't stay in that stable! That's for paying customers. Who do you take me for?" We find joy in making room for people in need. Reflect on the mysterious words found in Hebrews: "Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2).

Joy is celebrating when you want to fear. - What's the first thing angels say to mortals? It's standard protocol. In just about every divine encounter the angels say: "Fear not." I can hear Jesus instruct His most trusted angels. "OK, let's go over this again ... Most of the people that I'll tell you to speak to will be scared out of their wits! So let's practice the greeting one more time." Then the angels would all say in unison, "Fear not."

Understand Why We Can Be Joyful - The message is clear. God is not looking for ways to scare us into faith. He drew near to us to relieve the worries we have about crossing over the divide between heaven and earth.

He wants you to know that He's going to take care of you no matter what happens. One of the names that He was called long before he ever stepped on this world's stage was Immanuel meaning "God with us."

No matter what you go through we can whisper this simple truth: "Jesus is with me." Think about it. He is with you in your greatest victories and your most humiliating defeats. Jesus is with you at all times in all things.

JOURNALING -

- Share one thing that you're trusting God to handle.
- Write a note to someone who is experiencing fear and worry. Let them know you're praying that God will give them the courage they need.
- Make an inventory of the things that bring you joy.
- Make the time and space to share a meal and have a fun experience.

Pray:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is discord, union.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
Where there is injury, pardon.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
— *Prayer for Peace of St. Francis of Assisi*

Talking to Our Heavenly Father - *If we have faith, our prayers will be answered.* You're Not Alone, Let Us Pray with You & For You

- We extend our prayers, support and love to Mr. Ralph and Ms. Bonnie Hensel on the passing of Mr. Ralph's brother-in-law, Mr. Keith Blevons on December 5, 2021. To Mr. Ralph's sister, Ms. Beverly, "the Fifth Ave. UMC family extends to you our sincerest condolences on the passing of Mr. Keith. Please know we are here for you and your family as we keep you all in our thoughts and prayers. Cards and notes of condolences and care can be mailed to Mrs. Beverly Blevons, C/O Mr. Ralph Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend, WI 53095. Cards and notes of love and tenderness can be sent to Mr. Ralph and Ms. Bonnie Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Bro. Bob Krell, prayers for strength and healing. Please mail cards and notes of prayer and encouragement to: Bro. Bob Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr., was recently hospitalized for cardiac concerns. After heart procedures and changes in medication he has returned home. Cards and notes of cheer and well wishes for Mr. Len and Ms. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mrs. Marilyn Liepert has a recent medical crisis. She has returned home but needs your prayers and encouragement. Mrs. Marilyn Liepert, Cedar Bay West Rm 2126, 5555 Cedar Bay Dr., West Bend WI 53095. Her phone number is: 262-353-7749; she would love to hear your voice.

- With the Promise of the Resurrection, we extend to Ms. Jean Seeger and her family, our deepest sympathy at this sad and difficult time on the passing of her sister, Mary Kerslake, on 16 November 2021. May you face each new day with the certainty that your sister is in God's presence. Cards and notes of care and support can be mailed to: Mrs. Jean Seeger,
- The sweet, sweet spirit of Mrs. Betty Felt was called home to glory on 26 October 2021. Ms. Betty's Celebration of Life Service will be held, 6 November 2021 at 12:30 p.m. with visitation from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Cards and notes of condolences can be mailed to Ms. Poly and Bro. Dave Bertelsen, 5588 Whispering Pines Drive, West Bend WI 53095
- Ms. Ashley Barnett extends her sincere appreciation to the Fifth Ave. Family & Friends for your prayers and encouragement during her extended illness. Healing is going well.
- Fifth Avenue UMC, thank you for your unceasing prayers for Ms. Irina Johnson, daughter (in-law) of Ms. Barb Johnson. Ms. Irina has completed a series of chemotherapy. She is feeling and doing well. Cards and notes of continued healing, strength and comfort can be mailed C/O Ms. Barb Johnson, Ms. Irina Johnson, 190 Mayer Street, West Bend, WI 53090
- Mr. Ted Meilahn, has been admitted to Cedar Lake Rehabilitation Center. Please send cards or notes of encouragement and support to the church office: Mr. Ted Meilahn, C/O Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church, 323 South 5th Ave. West Bend, WI 53095 and Mr. Gil Sheridan or I will deliver them. Thank you in advance for your love and care of Mr. Ted.
- Ms. Trisha Funke, daughter of Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel. Ms. Trisha has returned home and is discerning her return to her vocation as a teacher. Ms. Trishia is still awaiting further diagnosis. Cards of encouragement and prayers for continued healing and diagnosis can be sent to her parents: Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend WI 53095
- Mr. Roger Sacia, is requesting prayers for healing; Mrs. Nobi Sacia words of encouragement and prayers for healing. Mr. Roger and Ms. Nobi have permanently relocated to Madison with their daughter. Their new address is: 1626 Jefferson Street, Madison WI 53711
- Mr. William (Bill) & Mrs. Ginger Hornung would love to hear from you! Cards or notes of encouragement or "just thinking of you" can be mailed to: W194N16744 Eagle Dr. Room 3, Jackson, WI 53037
- Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, continued healing; alankempf33@gmail.com; 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- Fifth Avenue UMC's Laity, Accountable Leadership Board, Pastor & Bro. Martin – Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.
- Ms. Nancy Whitson, healing and strength; 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mr. Phil Heimerl, son-in-law of Mike & Fay Lewis. He was just diagnosed with ALS.

Psalm 51:12 says, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

Lord, would you restore the joy of our salvation? Help us to be willing to follow you with all we have. As we read the Scriptures that remind us who you are and the ways you love us, ignite in us a sense of joy that overflows out of our hearts! Let this holy joy be contagious and spill over onto the lives of those around us. May your peace that surpasses all understanding be upon us...especially as we're wrapping up a year that has felt very scary and uncertain. Encourage our hearts with the knowledge that with *you* we can live in your perfect peace, no matter our circumstances. We thank you for the joy and peace you give! Amen.

We have waited long for You. Deep has been our darkness.

We long for You to shine right here among us where we are.

We will not fear the shadows that surround us if only You will come among us!

We wait the sound of a cry in the night, the joy that follows pain, the coming of hope.

Your humble Pastor & Servant Leaders,
Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin