

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
3rd Sunday in Advent
December 11, 2022
Scripture: Psalm 146:5-10; Luke 2:8-12

Sermon: Be Born in Us Today: Bringing Everlasting Joy

The Third Candle we lit today is Joy and its color is pink not purple like the other three candles. The Angel on the night Jesus was born announced to the shepherds saying: ***“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”***

The pink represents the joy the shepherds experienced when they received the good news about Christ’s birth. During the middle of the night, the darkest time, the shepherds encountered angels.

The 3rd Sunday in Advent is ***Gaudete Sunday*** (from the Latin meaning “rejoice”) which is taken from ***Philippians 4:4-5***. ***“Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again-rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.”***

Usually we lose our joy at the most joyous season of the year for different reasons. The Lord Jesus came to the world to bring joy into our hearts, regardless of our pain, sorrows and worries. When we read the fourth chapter of Philippians, we see that Paul knows the difficulties that the believers face and shows how we can regain the joy that we had lost.

In **Isaiah 61** the prophet Isaiah rejoices because the Lord sends him to proclaim the good news of the deliverance to the suffering people of Israel. Joy passes from the promise to the reality that one day the anointed one will come bringing the good news to the poor, comforting the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives and those who mourn will receive a crown of beauty for ashes, and a joyous blessing instead of mourning, and festive praise instead of despair.

Advent is a time of transformation from prophecy to reality; from waiting to fulfillment and from despair to hope and praise. Advent is the time to wait for the Baby Jesus with great excitement. Advent is a time to wait for the One who will be our Savior.

We know the prophecies, and we know the present fulfillment of the prophecies, and we know the hope of the future as we wait for the Second Advent of our Savior. We can understand God working in the past and God working in the present, but we are all awaiting the working of God in the future.

God promises us a change of heart from sadness to joy in a right relationship with God living in the midst of the betweenness of our age and the age to come. As Christians we are living waiting for what is to come with the Second Advent. We are living in-between Jesus' birth and his next coming. We are called to be ready and prepared for that time to come. We are to wait with joy in our hearts.

As we wait, we are empowered with the joy of the Lord being our strength. But we are living in a time when we're faced with anxiety, and fear streaming in at us 24/7. People are struggling to feel, let alone feel joy; for many, joy is replaced with numbness, sadness and loneliness.

Joy is defined as: A feeling of great pleasure or happiness, caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying. A settled state of contentment, confidence and hope.

Joy is not like happiness, which is based solely upon favorable circumstances. Joy is a supernatural emotion that remains in the life of a believer in spite of their circumstances.

James 1:2 says, ***“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.”*** Hebrews 12:2 also tells us, ***“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”***

Someone once said, “Joy is not the absence of suffering, it is the presence of God.” The great Billy Sunday said, “If you have no Joy, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere.”

The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians in a prison cell and Philippians is known as the Letter of Joy because Paul found joy that was immovable and unshakeable because his joy was rooted in his Savior, Jesus Christ. God doesn't want his children living miserable, joyless lives. God wants us to be filled with his joy by living in his presence and in the presence of others filled with the joy of the Lord. God wants us to be filled with his Holy Spirit which fills us with joy.

When we accept Christ, he gives us a new purpose and calling. "Show me a person without a purpose, and I will show you a person without Joy!" The moment we stop wandering away from Christ, and start living for Christ, Joy comes into our hearts!

Psalms 30:5, written by David, tells us to cry out to God for help when life is difficult. He tells us, *"For his anger is but for a moment, his favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night. But a shout of joy comes in the morning."*

This means that, after a difficult time and you feel as though you are in darkness, joy will be restored when you allow God to walk with you during the pain and darkness, and he will again remind you to choose joy because the mercies of God are new every morning, which cause joy, and call for thankfulness. Joy can be found with God in the midst of pain, in the in-between places of our life.

Isaiah 49:13 says, *"Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted."*

We can experience joy in the midst of our worst circumstances because God is with us, Immanuel. So no matter what you are going through right now, don't stop praying until you see joy come in the morning. God wants us to have an everlasting joy in all circumstances of life.

The world is deeply affected by the reality of sin and death, and we see it every day on the news. It is a world of brokenness but yet God promises us an everlasting joy in knowing Immanuel, God with us.

God wants to clothe us in “robes of righteousness.” When God became flesh he took upon himself all of our shame and guilt and welcomed us into perfect communion with God. When God dresses us, we put on the garment of joy.

Everlasting joy is only to be found in the presence of our loving Savior. Joy is a gift of grace that we freely receive from our Savior and all we have to do is open the gift of everlasting joy.

Joy is only found in Jesus and in his presence. God wants to give you not just JOY but EVERLASTING JOY!

God wants to create a new thing in your life, and he wants you to be glad and rejoice forevermore. Everlasting joy is yours this Advent season.

“Do not fear. For behold, I give to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For to you is born today, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Isaiah 55:12 says to us, *“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills before you shall break forth in singing.”*

May Everlasting Joy Be Born in Us Today for nothing is impossible with God!