



“Advent 2021”
Wk. 3 JOY
By Pastor Jody May 12/19/2021

The Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our **JOY** may be complete.

[REVIEW]

HOPE – Christmas Hope is the confidence that good things are still to come anchored in past events (Titus 2:11-14).

LOVE- Christmas Love is the realization that God loves sinners first rescuing us from our condemnation (John 3:16-17).

JOY – Christmas Joy is the expectancy of receiving what God intended in creation, Joy. (1 John 1:1-4)

[CONNECT/INTRO]

4 And we are writing these things so that our **JOY** may be complete.

Joy, it was something that John and the other church fathers were experiencing and building upon because it was a **part** of the Christian life. Joy has a **direct connection** to knowing the Son (vs.1-3). Joy can and should be **pursued** in such a way that it grows to completion (intent of v. 4).

One should conclude after verses 1-4 is that Joy is an assumption/byproduct/fruit of the Christian life, it is to be nurtured and expected for all believers.



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Now that is easy to say, but in my youth, I thought Joy was the furthest thing from the Christian life for my first years of being in the church did not bring me much joy.

As a kid I had to behave well, dress appropriately, act right in Sunday School, sit still and be quiet in church, miss my Sunday morning cartoons and Sunday Night Disney programming, all upon pain of getting my but whipped if I did not perform for my mother’s approval.

As a middle school/high school student growing up in my home church, it also taught me that my life was not that enjoyable when everyone in my church knew what I was always doing in school. There was no way ever I could skip one day of school, I couldn’t get in minor trouble because it meant every teacher was in on my discipline, and if I dared rebelled against my mother, I was publically shamed. And as far as a personal life, well growing up in a Christian school environment meant I had none, nope no Joy there for me.

No wonder when I left home after high school, I never lived in that town again for to me many things were not joyful about home but painful. Joy and Christianity, Joy and church, Joy and Christians were just two things that did not go together. Let me also say that is all about **ME**, the **problem** is my **perception**; did you notice in my description the trend of *I didn’t get what I wanted therefore I wasn’t happy*? This also meant though, that Christmas for me over the years was and is still sometimes a struggle because I go looking for Joy OUTSIDE of God and His people at times.

I mean the call of the **holidays is that it must be ALL about Joy** or the pursuit of it right? We say things like Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, have a Holly Jolly whatever, Joy to the World, the expectation is that this holiday, **ADVENT, is all about JOY!** Yet so many of us have a hard time being happy this time of year. The problem is not that it’s not there to be found, the **problem is that we think Joy must be manifested from ourselves**, that we must be the creators of our own contentment and according to scripture that is the furthest thing from the Truth. Society pressures us into believing that the end goal of Christmas is to be happy therefore WORK at making that happen BUT scripture says that Christmas was the



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culmination of Joy, and you should just be enjoying it! Joy comes not in what you can do but from the fact it has already been delivered!

Joy should be our expectation for it is an intent of God.

What we all need to do is take a chill pill this morning, go back to God’s Word, believe what it says and let it teach us God’s intention in wanting us to enjoy life, for there is a way to find Joy not just at Christmas but in all of life. It is a part of God’s desire for His people to have joy and I want us to learn and realize three things to get us back on track.

1. Joy Starts in the Beginning.

The Word of Life

1 That which was from the **beginning**, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the **word of life**—

John is hinting at one of his earlier writings, his gospel. He is alluding to something he wrote previously to bring to the mind of his readers where their Joy began.

John 1:1-4 ESV

1 In the **beginning** was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the **beginning** with God. **3** All things were **made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life, and the **life** was the **light of men**.

This Word of God (Jesus) was not just at the beginning but through Him, for Him, and by Him, all things were made. To learn about the beginning is to learn about Jesus who came in flesh at Advent, it’s the same person.

So, **one more time this season** let’s go back to the beginning. BTW I hope you are picking up on a trend: where do we keep going to define the Spirit of Advent?



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Back to Genesis, because **Advent is part one in the process to redo creation**, so it is natural we find these pieces of Advent in the creation story.

Genesis 1:31 ESV

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was **very good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Good – *pleasing to the senses, agreeable, no complaints*, and at the conclusion of all things made, creation had become VERY agreeable, VERY good. It was so good that in Gen. 2 God rests, He is no longer in the act of making, He’s finished, no need to work and when God stops working then it means **Creation has reached the best** that it will become. Man was made in God’s image (27) and then blessed with dominion (28) over all creation for it was **God’s intent for man to enjoy God’s work.**

Westminster Shorter Catechism¹

Q: What is the chief end of man?

A: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

Now this is where we go off the rails, this is what makes life hard, this is what makes Christmas hard to stomach sometimes. We are to enjoy; live for Joy in God, and yet that **doesn’t come naturally**. Out of all the people in the Bible Job is probably the person that we all have associated with at one time or another. Job; *if it wasn’t for bad luck, I’d have no luck at all* - Job, still was not allowed to accuse God for a bad creation, he wasn’t allowed to blame God for his misery.

Job 38:4 & 7 ESV

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁷ when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for **joy?**

¹ https://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/wsc/wsc_001.html



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God’s creation brings joy, but it is life’s circumstances that bring us misery and it is our perceptions of life that keep us from enjoying it. Job was starting to believe that the intent of God was to make him miserable, but God points back to the **intent of creation, and Joy was the fruit of it!** God is like, “You are having a crisis and it has eschewed your perception Job.”

[CHALLENGE]

That’s where, if we are honest, most of us are like/similar Job. We start believing if we are good, THEN we should always be happy. If we believe this, it would mean that the intent of creation was to make ‘you/us’ God, and that creation should/could be manipulated by ‘you/us’ to get Joy. **Adam and Eve** thought by eating the fruit they could manipulate creation to bring them more Joy by giving them unlimited knowledge all unearned to make them like God. BUT in making the pursuit of Joy primary above all else in creation instead of making the pursuit of God primary in their lives, they fell. Now we are born in that same spirit of rebellion/original sin making us fallen, and just like them we **become trapped** to the **pursuit of Joy** instead of pursuit of God. What we need to learn: **The chief end of man is to enjoy God because the chief priority of man is to glorify Him FIRST... We reach Joy THROUGH living for God!**

Joy all **started** in the **beginning**, and therefore it is ok to **expect it** for it was an **intent** of God. We just have to be conscious that it is our perceptions of life that gets us all twisted. That’s ok, God knows our hearts and that is why God conceived before creation a Booster shot of Joy.

2. Joy is Strengthened through Advent.

² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was the life and light of men (John 1:1-4). Now John is saying this same **root of Joy**, the same **being** that said it was **VERY GOOD** how He made the world, the same **being** that corrected Job on his **perceptions**, the same **being** that intended to make all of creation point to Him so



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that **we would enjoy Him forever** had a plan! As a part of adding to our joy to strengthen it, He plans a visit.

Luke 2:10-11 ESV

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news of great JOY** that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

This visit though is not without pain for the creator. To manifest would mean the creator would display or show Himself, He would be **Incarnated**, put on flesh. You and I need to understand that our problem required the Word to put on flesh that would now **never be taken off**. Forever Jesus came so He could associate with us, not just to visit but to stay in humanity, He would become God in flesh, Immanuel – *God with us*.

There is nothing that speaks to the **volume of love** as a **personal visit**. **The greater the discomfort, the greater the challenge in the travel, the longer the removal from home, shows the intensity of love.** Heather just flew this past week by herself to see her family. For most of us that’s no big deal, but for Heather it was a HUGE deal. Heather, since I have known her, has never flown by herself. She will tell you if she was here that there is no comfort in being locked in a small space, with a lot of people, with locked doors, traveling miles above the ground that makes her happy. So, for her to go by herself to see her family should be telling them the extent of her missing them and how much she loves them! It’s a big deal!

Our God and King Jesus left His perfect home to be associated with sinners, to be born in flesh, so that we would know the extent of His love. The more we grow in the understanding of this love, the more He is glorified and the more we are spurred on to live for Him. Our Joy in Him is being strengthened by His first coming/Advent because we see that **all His life was a sacrifice**, all His life was the **suffering work** of a servant (**Is. 53**),

³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;



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and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

To suffer for Jesus was to visit creation and no one revered Him, no one thanked Him, no one loved Him, no one understood the cost of His visit. All of Jesus’ life was about showing His creation, us/this world, that He loved us. That is what corrects your perception of life, that is what gets your sight off your own woes, that’s what puts your vision back on what is important, living for His glory! To glorify is what we are called to do when it dawns on us the cost of His visit:

Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking 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.

To **fulfill all JOY** Jesus endured the cross. It was the Joy of the Son to love His Father above all and it was the Joy of God to die for His people. It all brings us Joy, His people, as we now see Him reign as a conqueror of death, sin, and the devil. Yes, we too will now lay aside, throw it away, that which encumbers us so we can **run for Joy** this race before us!

Jesus that first Advent to Strengthen our Joy, so we should **expect to be joyful** this Christmas, not because of what we must do to get it, but because **Jesus has already done it, out of JOY!** It was His **intent** from the **beginning** to visit with us so we would know how much He loves us and that is what gives us Joy this Christmas.

Yes, Joy was strengthened by Advent demonstrating His great love for us and now as John alludes to in v. 4, he is writing in the company of other Christians so that their **Joy would be made complete**. The path to keep one’s Joy and to accomplish the act of fulfilling your destiny, **to Glorify God to receive this full joy forever**, is to do it with others.



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3. Joy is Sustained through Christian Fellowship.

³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that **you too** may have **fellowship** with **us**; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the **Father** and with his **Son Jesus Christ**.

I am going to compliment Pastor Bill since he is not here this morning with us. The Apostle John in some ways is like our very own Pastor Bill. You see John loves to **INCLUDE** people, and so does Bill! These men love to love others and there is nothing that makes them happier than to extend the invitation ‘to love’ out to others! Fellowship is what John wants everyone to experience, and he says there is a party going on in God’s house, the disciples with me, the Father w/us because the relationship with God has been reconciled because we also have a relationship with the Son that fixed it! John is extending the invitation to Christian fellowship because in Christian fellowship people experience the intent again of v. 4:

⁴ And we are writing these things so that our **JOY** may be complete.

The ‘**our**’ means everybody from vs.1-3! A **Christian’s Joy is made complete** not by going to church once a week, not attending corporate church programming, and then going home, NO! A Christian’s Joy is made complete by doing life together, praying together, working towards advancing the Kingdom together, serving together, striving for Hope, Love, Joy and Peace together, Joy is complete BY the Fellowship of the Saints!

Now if you want more reasoning, you introverted types, because I know for you extroverted types that’s an easy invite, I have some reasons:

First, because you do not hold, nor will you ever hold, all the secrets of God and you need others to increase your knowledge of God, increasing your joy.

Second, you need to be reminded at times, some more than others, that life **isn’t** about you, it’s about God.



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Thirdly, you need to be the one reminding others about why we exist to bring God glory first AND THEN receive Joy for living that way.

Christian Fellowship is about sharing your knowledge of God, reminding others of His goodness, and receiving encouragement when you forget.

[CHALLENGES]

This morning I know some of you are having trouble being joyful this time of year because of current circumstances in your life, but perhaps you are forgetting that in God’s sovereignty He works all things to the good for those He has called. It is not up to you to make yourself joyful, but it is **up to you to put your mind** back on Him and ask Him again to show you His intent for your life, to bring Him glory, not your pursuit of happiness.

This morning, some of you may be trying to produce Joy out of your own works, working longer, working harder, resting and playing less. Perhaps you’re doing so much that you can’t focus on the strength that Advent already has in it. Rejoice **first**, for you have already received your king, and if you have received your king, then all things are **under His control**, why are you working so hard to control things yourself? Pray and ask Him to reset your priorities.

This morning some of you think there is no joy or little joy in Christian fellowship. You are ready to toss it away for programming, you are ready to toss it for isolation, you are ready to toss it in for TBN. I will remind you again what you really need is a group of people around you to encourage you so that your joy is made complete, then at the right time you will be able to encourage them even to gain another measure of Joy.

The Christian life is really all about Joy isn’t it...

Joy should be our expectation for it is an intent of God.

This morning let’s seek our Joy together and go to our great and gracious God and ask Him to make your Joy complete.



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[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, who's intent was to make for Himself a people, to glorify Himself, and so that they may enjoy Him forever.

Go in the name of the Son, that for Joy's sake went to the Cross, perfecting and modeling the true path to Joy.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, the giver of life so that we may receive true Joy by understanding even as a sinner God died for us, now go and share this news with your world.