



JOY

ADVENT | Week 3

What the world needs is joy. At some level, we all know that, but really internalizing that truth changes the way we see the world around us and the people living in it. Ultimately, just about every activity we pursue and every relationship we nurture is in the pursuit of joy. We want to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. And yet, we never seem to succeed. It's just not enough.

But we are a species that was created intentionally by a loving God to resemble and reflect Him in this broken world. This Creator God is a God of joy because He lacks nothing. That's instructive. The sovereign God of the cosmos is full of joy—and His great desire for every human heart is that they experience joy as well. What if we really lacked for...nothing?

Joy is the outcome of fulfillment.

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11, ESV). God the Father sent the Son so that the redeemed would actually “enjoy this life with Jesus’ enjoying.” He wants His joy to be our joy. What God has is enough; He is fulfilled. What He has given us is enough, even in the midst of a corrupt context. We are fulfilled, and the free gift of grace is not merely everlasting life, but never-ending joy!

It's like the great old hymn, *Joy to The World* by Isaac Watts reminds us:

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

The ground we walk on has been cursed because of sin. But the King of glory has reversed the curse and made joy available to all mankind. May we all experience and appreciate true and lasting fulfillment this Advent season. Joy to the world!

The Battle Between Light and Dark

“And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

1 John 1:4-7 (ESV)

If you've ever watched the original *Star Wars* movies in order, you know this was a story that was meant to be told in a certain way. You remember the tension, watching Luke Skywalker fight the man who was the commander of all things dark. Luke wasn't just fighting for his life; he was fighting for his soul. He had just learned that the man he was fighting wasn't just the infamous Darth Vader, but that man was his father. The dad he never knew but longed to know. The man he dreamed about as a kid and asked his uncle about all the time. It was his father that was Darth Vader, and it was his father he was fighting. It was the green versus red lightsaber. Good versus Evil. Light versus Dark.

Perhaps, as you watched this story unfold, you wondered if you too would have been strong enough to resist the dark side. Luke was being coaxed to join his father so that they could rule the galaxy... together. Luke was stronger than any of us would have been. The battle continued, Luke prevailed, and he ended up saving his father in the process.

It's easy to think of the Lord in the same way. The first Christmas morning 2,000 years ago, when Jesus came into this world, the battle between light and darkness took center stage and the match was going to be epic. It seemed like it was going to be a close battle, and the world had a front row seat to see who would prevail.

But that's not even kind of how it works is it?

God doesn't just squeak by and barely defeat the enemy. To say He crushes him is even an understatement.

John tells us that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all! What happens when we turn on a light switch in a dark room? Does the light have a hard time pushing back the darkness? Does it struggle to overcome it? Not at all! Even the darkness in the darkest closet in the darkest part of your house completely disappears when the light switch is turned on. Its power is neutralized when confronted by light.

That is how strong our Lord is. But, there is even greater news for us—we can have that same light that is in Jesus. Of course that's why John tells us that his joy is complete. We can have that same joy! As we align ourselves with Jesus, we can experience and identify with that very same light. We also get to do this together as Christians. This is how we get to fellowship (or really enjoy) each other. Because we have light that will push away the darkness, we are forgiven and we can truly be free from sin and darkness.

“There is evil casted around us, but it's love that wrote the play” –David Wilcox

Futher Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. How have you experienced the power of God in your life?
2. What gives you joy?
3. What makes your joy “complete”?
4. What does “completed joy” feel like?

Further Reflection | Family Activity

1. Listen to David Wilcox's song “Show the Way.” What stuck out to you? Talk about it.

“... the battle between light and darkness took center stage... and the world had a front row seat to see who would prevail.”

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Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

