



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!

He Gave His Only Son

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

John 3:16–17 (ESV)

Imagine Christmas morning with presents bursting out from under the tree. The smell of coffee and cider and cinnamon rolls in the air. Stockings full of surprises. A crackling fire glowing in the fireplace against December’s chill in the outside air. “Joy to the world” playing softly in the background. There is an excitement every parent knows, anticipating the joy and laughter that will soon fill the home.

In reality, Christmas Day doesn’t always turn out like a Norman Rockwell painting. But, a tree, some gifts, a cup a coffee, and a child or two to watch tear through some wrapping paper is always a great day. There is a joy that comes with watching a present being opened. On Christmas morning, the joy of giving intersects with the excitement of receiving.

Most parents love to give gifts to their children. There are few things in life that compare to watching joy flow over in those you love with all your heart.

That is why it is almost impossible—not to mention disheartening—to imagine that a Christmas morning filled with so much promise would be met with disinterest and ambiguity. This isn’t referring to the kind of indifference you see

when a 6-year-old (who used to wake you up at 4 a.m. wanting to know, “Is it Christmas yet?!”) transitions to a teenager (who might casually roll out of bed at 9:30 a.m. so as not to appear to “excited” about anything).

No, this is about a complete and total apathy. It’s hard to imagine a Christmas morning brimming with decorations, anticipations, expectations, excitement, and unopened gifts without a soul to step in and enjoy the moment. In fact, there would be nothing sadder than a celebration that is discarded.

John 3:16-17 has Christmas morning celebration written all over it. The artistic ability of Norman Rockwell can’t come close to capturing the heavenly joy, anticipation, excitement, and eagerness that our Father God experiences when the story of his Son, Jesus, is heard for the very first time—or remembered all over again for the 10,000th time. The joy of Christmas never gets old, or does it?

C.S. Lewis captures the misery of the world around us when he describes the sadness of Narnia as, “always winter, but never Christmas.”

It is easy to become burdened by the “winter” of this weary world and forget that Christmas has come, and is coming. We have a heavenly Father who delights in seeing the gift of His Son received and celebrated with eagerness and joy.

The truth of Christianity is that it is always Christmas morning. “Joy to the world” is ringing out from heaven. “Peace on earth” echoes in our hearts. The grace of God is bursting out from the tree of the cross.

Isaac Watts captures the hope of Christianity beautifully in the third verse of *Joy to the World*:

No more let sin and sorrow grow
Nor thorns infest the ground:
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

“We have a heavenly
Father who delights
in seeing the gift of
His Son received
and celebrated with
eagerness and joy.”

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...” It has been rightly said that you can replace “the world” with your own name and not change the meaning at all.

If, during this Advent season, you find yourself weary from the winter of the world, this is a great day to remember the joy of the Christmas that has come, and is coming. Your heavenly Father is eager for you to delight in the joy of His Son all over again. And He wants you to long for His “blessings to flow far as the curse is found.”

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. What circumstance, or relationship, or part of life do you feel the “winter of this weary world” the most?
2. What can you do today to bring the joy of “the Christmas that has come, and is coming” into that part of your world?
3. How does the truth, “For God so loved (fill in your name...and say it out loud), that he gave His only Son,” impact your life and thinking today?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. Tell a story about the best present you have ever opened?
2. Who gave you that present and what made it so great?
3. We celebrate Christmas to remember that Jesus was God’s gift to us on that first Christmas morning. And as fun and exciting as Christmas is to celebrate now, what do you think it will be like to celebrate and remember Christmas in heaven?

Notes:

Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

