

*Hark the glad sound, the Savior comes, the Savior promised long. Let every heart prepare a throne and every voice a song!*

### **Be Filled with Advent Joy!**

- I. It depends on where you look
- II. It depends on what you are looking for

### **INTRODUCTION**

*“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!”*

*“Be the one who brings a smile to that special person’s face and puts joy in their hearts.”*

And we just sang “Rejoice!, Rejoice!” .

Those are the phrases we hear and maybe use around this time of the year to describe the joy that people want to have and are looking for. We are deluged by advertising which tries to convince us that if we want to have true Christmas joy, it has to be with sparkle and magic.

But let’s be honest about it - is that the way we really feel? Might we better relate to terms like “*stressed out*”, “*hurried and harried*”, “*depressed*” or “*gloomy*”? We may not like to hear it, but this is the time of the year when there are more suicides than any other time of the year, the holidays put more people into depression than any other season of the year.

People want joy, but they are obviously not finding it or looking in the right place.

This third Sunday of Advent as you have heard in service so far speaks of joy. It promises joy. It points us to the place to find true and lasting joy.

The prophet Isaiah in our first lesson speaks of joy even 700 years before that first Christmas came and uses all sorts of pictures to describe the joy he is speaking of – he tells us

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Often we hear that people want to make joy bloom and grow at Christmas. Isaiah tells us how that can happen. It depends on 2 things 1) Where you look and 2) what you are looking for. Listen again to the last verse (v.10) of our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah 35 and listen to the joy Isaiah tells us we will have if we look in the right place and for the right reason.

#### **I. It depends on where you look**

Under the Christmas tree. In bright, shiny wrapped package. In a special, magical human being. Those are the places people look for joy when they think of Christmas. Yes, they may bring joy for a time, but what about when that special item breaks or that special person isn’t with us. Where do we look for joy then?

Isaiah uses a number of pictures –crocuses blooming, deaf people hearing, dumb people speaking, blind people seeing, pools of water in the dessert, a lack of violence and hatred. Situations as diverse as you can imagine – but all having joy none-the-less. They all point back to one thing or place. While these are things which we might consider impossible, they are possible for God in his almighty power. Depending on how you want to picture it, they point to the manger or else you could say they all point back to the Word of our God. That is where you find joy.

If we want to find true and lasting joy this Advent-Christmas season, Isaiah points us still today to look to the Word of our God. That alone is what brings us comfort and joy now and throughout the year.

## II. It depends on what you are looking for

Are you looking for joy that puts a smile on the face or joy that brings peace to the heart? The way you answer that question might indicate what kind of joy you are looking for.

The other mistake that people often make is looking in the right place for the wrong thing.

Very often we think that in order to have joy we have to bring in someone or something special.

God's recipe for Christmas joy was to bring a special person, his Son, into the world. But he doesn't point us to look to him for joy, he points us to look to what he has come to take away.

If we really want to find joy this Advent/Christmas season as we look to the word of God, we shouldn't expect or ask God to bring us special toys or other items. Isaiah reminds us what to ask for. Joy is found in God sending his Son to take away sin and its effects.

As we will pray in a few minutes in the Prayer of the Church – *“You sent your Son to redeem us from sin. Let this good news be our joy and strength. Use it to cheer the lonely, encourage the fearful and give hope to the despairing.....Fill our lives with the message of your peace and the music of your grace.”*

That is what Isaiah points to. That is what will really give us joy. We can use wrapping paper and other decorations to try to cover up sin. That may give us joy for a while. But if we really want to find joy – the joy that comes when the robber of our joy – sin – is gone.

## CONCLUSION

Joy that is what each of us wants to have for ourselves and many others this Advent and Christmas season. Remember the words of the hymn new sang just before the sermon – O Come, O Come Emmanuel. That is what gives us deep down the joy we want and that will allow us to rejoice, yes rejoice in the Lord always! Amen.