



## ADVENT WEEK 3 | JOY

December 10, 2023

### [Worship Music Playlist](#)

#### SONG 1 | Hope Has Come Near by Paper Horses

#### CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 30:1-5

I will praise you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

#### WELCOME | Announcements (Holiday Calendar & Resources & Traditions)

Advent is a journey through stories. Stories of our faith and stories of the faithful. Stories fictitious and factual. Stories we are familiar with, and stories obscure. Stories told through daily devotions, weekly prayers, and gathered and focused in Sabbath worship. What you'll notice is that these stories flow, as we've said, to Christmas Day, but they share something more than steps toward a destination. The stories come together around themes represented by our candles and presented throughout our Gathered times in the songs sung, prayers prayed, and scriptures read. From the collects (together voiced versed prayers) to the carols, from the call to worship to the benediction, each element in our Advent Gathering tells the story within the day's theme. Hope and Peace are already alight and so shed light not on concepts grasped and ready to be moved past, but as parts of the whole being revealed. The thing about Advent's focus and themes is that they are never stand-alone. While there will be a new theme today, it's not reached through Hope and Peace, but bound to them, woven with them, helping us enter a vision of life as it is and will be that is full, complete, and holy in its living newness. So, let me encourage you to pay attention and see the connections and completions that bring together days not merely in linear progression but in the unity of a prophetic vision of life.

#### ADVENT STORY | "The First Christmas Tree" (see additional printout for slides)

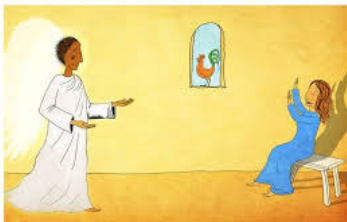
For Advent is meant for that! A season adored with symbols to help us **pay attention to the visions of anticipation and arrival**, the beginnings of the end, which is a mending—fractures healed, life, real life restored—and all that comes with such an arrival. Much like our story today will continue to do.

**[INVITE DANA & THE KIDS TO THE STAGE STEPS & READ]** – See Additional Sheet for Slides

Like the double gift of peace, joy is a force that moves us through our daily travails, manifesting not merely in the celebrations of what we receive but from our response, what is given in the presence of the Giver, whether joy poured out is a meager day's labor like the Three Skaters or simply the daily faith given to us, as Mary's story reveals.

Here to tell us that story from Luke's gospel and light our third Advent candle, the special pink candle of joy, is Elliana.

## ADVENT WREATH | Elliana Gorrell



There was a young girl who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Joseph was the great-great-great-grandson of King David.

One morning, this girl was minding her own business when, suddenly, a great warrior of light appeared—right there, in her bedroom. He was Gabriel, and he was an angel, a special messenger from heaven.

When she saw the tall, shining man standing there, Mary was frightened.

'You don't need to be scared,' Gabriel said. 'God is very happy with you!'

Mark looked around to see if perhaps he was talking to someone else.

'Mary,' Gabriel said, and he laughed with such gladness that Mary's eyes filled with sudden tears.

'Mary, you're going to have a baby. A little boy. You will call him Jesus. He is God's own Son. He's the One! He's the Rescuer!'

The God who flung planets into space and kept them whirling around and around, the God who made the universe with just a word, the one who could do anything at all—was making himself small. And coming down...as a baby.

Wait. God was sending a baby to rescue the world?

'But it's too wonderful!' Mary said and felt her heart beating hard. 'How can it be true?'

'Is anything too wonderful for God?' Gabriel asked.

So **Mary trusted God more than what her eyes could see.** And she believed. 'I am God's servant,' she said. 'Whatever God says, I will do.'"

**[Pause and pick up the lighter, then read...]**

**"the Lord Magnifies, enlarges my soul, and my spirit is full of joy in God, the Savior of me" (Luke 1:46-47)**

**[Now light the PINK candle]**

Hymn/Carol | Joy to the World by Traditional

Dismiss Kids

## SCRIPTURE READING | Isaiah 51:1-11

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; **joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.** “Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed. “Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool, but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.” Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; **everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy,** and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

## SONG #3 | To Thee We Run by Young Oceans

### SERMONETTE |

Prophets, like Isaiah and Jesus, for Jesus is not only the fulfiller of many prophecies, “but also...the wielder and kindler of the prophetic imagination, ”<sup>1</sup> call us to see the world as it is and is becoming; in the expectation that we’ll respond. They paint pictures in anticipation for you and me to respond to God with us not just for us, to the Kingdom of God within our grasp.

“Christ,” contends Malcolm Guite, “is constantly inviting us to imagine, and so to encounter, the Kingdom of God. He proclaims the Kingdom of God is at hand, and teaches us to pray that it should come. In every word, in every gesture he shows us what the Kingdom is, since he himself boides it forth. **To imagine the Kingdom is always a prophetic act, always a critique of this world, always a call to hope and action.**”<sup>2</sup>

Apocalyptic visions reveal the fractures of our world, but not only so. They also reveal what’s going on underneath the apparent and assumed. Prophetic voices call us to look and see with hope that beckons us to leave the cold isolation of life on our own and move toward something more splendid. They call us to action, purpose, the peacemaking that puts us right in the middle of the arrival of the thing for which we hope. Compelled to move, empowered with purpose, the visions of the end that are a mending already beginning

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Guite, *Lifting The Veil*, 90.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ,79.

are a prominent banner for our faith from the first moments of Eden's exile. Yet, hope and peace are not the crown of faith, the adorning evidence of an inward energy of our faith's persistence through the millennia into eternity. That distinction belongs to something else that arrived in flesh and blood that first Noel: **joy**.

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. For unto you is born...a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11)

Joy is an energy, not merely an attitude, that comes from someplace deep within but cannot help but be displayed,

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; **everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy**, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isaiah 51:11)

"wreathing" adorning the heads of God's people, filling ears and eyes because joy flows from mouths and hands. It cannot be contained! It is, however, as the Isaiah implies and the angel's proclaimed, "found...obtained," entered into as Jesus would put to the faithful servants:

'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' (Matthew 25:21)

That's what makes joy, like the Kingdom of God itself,

"A condition of complete simplicity/Costing not less than everything"<sup>3</sup>

Not a cost of admission, a payment to get into it, but rather, joy leads us to give everything.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (the lineage of our faith, like Abraham, Sarah, and Mary!), let us also lay aside every weight and sin (return not again to folly) which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder (beginning) and perfecter (end) 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 (the place he was when the Story began). (Hebrews 12:1-2)

There is no naivety in joy. It is not a pretending that all is okay but having been gripped by hope and being yielded by peace, the energy of joy perseveres us, allows us to give and in our giving, receive back what, as Zechariah said last week, and Isaiah alludes and the angels say to day, and as Jesus knows now, was ours at "the beginning." A life overflowing in life with God.

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<sup>3</sup> T.S. Elliot, "Little Gidding," from *The Four Quartets*, in *T.S. Elliot: Collected Poems 1909-1962*, 209.

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might **bless him and multiply him**. For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; **joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song...** My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out... And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; **everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy,** and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

(Isaiah 51:1-3,5, 11)

It is the energy of joy that enables our endurance to respond to God with us and for us with our voices and with our actions as the stories of our faith heritage and of Jesus, remind us. Gripped by hope, yielded by peace, it is joy that allows us to give our lives as a response to the life that is ours in God. A new life that last long beyond all that fades away. A life we know that is ours and is ours to share. For, as Isaiah depicts as the image came more clearly into view, and Jesus’ life and ministry testify, **we** are the manifestation of our Father’s joy:

Regarding Zion, I can’t keep my mouth shut; regarding Jerusalem, I can’t hold my tongue Until her righteousness blazes down like the sun and her salvation flames up like a torch. Foreign countries will see your righteousness, and world leaders your glory...No more will anyone call you Rejected, and your country will no more be called Ruined. You’ll be called *My Delight*, and your land *Married*, Because God delights in you and your land will be like a wedding celebration. For as a young man marries his virgin bride, so your builder marries you, And as a bridegroom is happy in his bride, so **your God is happy (takes joy) with you.** (Isaiah 60:1-5)

## REFLECTION |

But here is the thing about joy, it cannot be contained. It always shares, gives, flows out into life, as John testifies:

“that which we have seen and heard **we proclaim** also to you, **so that you to may have fellowship with us;** and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that **our joy may be complete.**” (1 John 1:3-4)

Joy is energy as much as an attitude that radiates, adorns, wreaths those who are responding to the presence of Life with them. It is not full and filling until it is shared. So:

What is covering your joy, keeping it from being complete?

## COLLECT & COMMUNION

“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?” (Isaiah 51:9-10)

Isaiah’s response to the vision of joy is like ours, to plead for what has been to be once again, confessing living under the covers of sight while clinging to the One whose joy enables ours.

### COLLECT | *Third Sunday of Advent*

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Through the body, blood, and life everlasting of Jesus, amen.

## SONG #4 | Holy, Holy, Holy by Traditional

## SCRIPTURE READING | Revelation 19:6-10

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

## SONG #5 | This is the Christ by Sandra McCracken

## SONG # 6| Joyful, Joyful by The Brilliance

## BENEDICTION | 1 Thessalonians 1:3-10

as I call to mind our work of faith, our labor of love, and our patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, together before God our Father, It is clear to me, friends, that God not only loves us very much but also has put his hand on us for something special. When the Message...came to you, it wasn’t just words. Something happened in you. The Holy Spirit put steel in your convictions. We paid careful attention to the way Jesus lived, and determined to live that way ourselves...imitating the Master. Although great trouble accompanied the Word, we were able to take great joy from the Holy Spirit!—taking the trouble with the joy, the joy with the trouble. Do you know that all over...believers look up to us? The word has gotten around. Our lives are echoing the Master’s Word...The news of our faith in God is out...how expectantly we await the arrival of his Son, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescued us from certain doom.