

IS THERE JOY IN YOUR LIFE
MICAH 5:2-5; JOHN 1:1-14; PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7
2025-12-14

Our theme verse for Advent is Romans 15:13 because this single verse contains all four Advent themes—Hope, Peace, Joy and the Love of God which overarches it all:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The God of hope will fill you with joy and peace when you trust Christ. In fact, when you trust Christ, you will overflow with hope. **In Ephesians 1**, the apostle Paul asked God **that “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know the hope that He has called you to.”**

And **that hope includes** us receiving Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour, which in turn makes us children of God. *John 1:12* says, “*Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God.*”

This hope isn’t just for a better day or an end to suffering, but also hope that our lives have meaning and possibility beyond our present situation. This is hope in God who makes all things new. Our hope is not in our circumstances. That’s why we hope in God who has always revealed Himself as a God of newness, redemption and transformation. Our amazing God sent a Saviour—His Son—to save the world and that includes you and me. For God so loved, that He sent His one and only Son that whoever believed in Him would not perish, but have eternal life.

Paul quoted Isaiah: “*The root of Jesse will spring up*”—that’s Jesus—one who will arise to rule over the nations; **the Gentiles will hope in Him**. The prophets oozed hope. Moses, in Deuteronomy 18, speaking God’s word said, “*I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in His mouth, and He will tell them everything I command Him.*” That prophet is Jesus. Isaiah also said:

“For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given; the government will be on His shoulders. He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to His authority and peace. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness... forever.” (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

He will be born of a virgin. He’ll be called Immanuel—God with us (Isaiah 7:14). He will be born in Bethlehem according to Micah (5:2). The time of His coming is revealed by Daniel.

On the second Sunday of Advent, our theme was peace. **Peace**, contrary to what many people believe, isn’t something we can achieve by trying to bring it about. That’s because peace

is not from us, it's a gift from God. In fact, it is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians.

The second aspect of peace is that it's not simply an absence of war or conflict; it has a whole inner dimension as well. It's a life lived without anxiety or inner turmoil. A life that's truly peaceful is a life resting in the full assurance God's in charge and will meet all your needs.

The result is a peace that passes all understanding—beyond what the world can comprehend. That makes sense, because Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came into the world to give us His peace. He's come into the world to establish peace between God the Father and us, His creation—something that is impossible, irreconcilable without Jesus. In Romans 5:1 Paul tells us that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ because we have been justified through faith in Him. In Colossians (1:20) Paul says God made peace with us through Jesus' blood shed on the cross and later he urged us to let the peace of Christ rule our hearts (3:15).

This third Sunday of Advent focuses on the theme of Joy. Do you have joy in your life—real joy? I'm talking about joy that others can see so much that they comment on it. Marg and I met a woman at the seniors home at Highland Crest. As we led worship, you couldn't help but take notice of her. She was smiling and very much engaged in the worship. I went to greet her when I finished the message. Both her arms ended midway past her elbows and on both legs she had prosthetic feet like you see some Paralympic athletes have. She had every reason to be bitter. But her story was awesome. She had suffered this loss of limbs due to illness years before. And during that time, she came to know Jesus. Out of her trials, came great joy. The Lord is using her in mighty ways. She speaks all over the world about the goodness of God. She exudes so much joy that others can see and comment on. Like peace, joy is God's doing, not ours.

Everyone can recall a time when they've been joyful, right? It may be your first love, your wedding, your first and subsequent children, your first job, car, holiday... But wait a minute. Are those right examples of joy? Hmm. Could you lose any of those things? Or put in a better way, could the joy you think of in these examples, fade? Yes, it could. That new car becomes an old Rolls Rust in time. That great job becomes a pain when you get to know the inside workings of the company or the corrupt ways of the boss. You're really talking about happiness that's dependent on circumstances. When the circumstances change, the "joy" can disappear in a hurry. That's not joy as God wants us to know it.

If God's the giver of joy, and God never changes, then real joy, which is centred in God, should never diminish. So, consider. Are you a joyful person? Or, are you given over to mood swings—sometimes joyful (maybe a better word is happy, since happiness we understand does change according to our circumstances) and sometimes sad or irritated or angry or whatever?

If you have your Bibles, I want to read some verses to you out of Nehemiah 8. You may be familiar with **Nehemiah 8:10: “The joy of the Lord is [our] strength.”** We’ll come back to that in a minute. Read verses 1-3. *“The people assembled as 1 man.” (1 focus) You are doing that here this morning. They told Ezra to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, (think about telling me to read Scripture to you) **which the Lord had commanded for Israel** ...He read it aloud from daybreak till noon (think my messages are too long??) ...and all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law...All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, ‘Amen! Amen! Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground...Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, ‘This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law...and now we get to it: ‘Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’”*

Do you know why they were weeping. Since the time of Joshua, until that day they had not heard the word of the Lord read publicly and they had not celebrated like this. “And their joy was very great.” OK, let’s bring this together. John 1 says: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”* Who is the Word? Yes, it’s Jesus. God brought the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt into the promised land. But, as you know, they sinned and sinned until God sent them into exile in Babylon. Now after 70 years again in captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah led them back to Canaan and this was their new start.

Similarly, Jesus, the Word, gives every one of us a brand new start. He instructs us with his Word. He is the real joy-giver. If the Israelites could express such great joy in that circumstance, what about us, who have been adopted by the Joy-Giver?

Joy can and should be constant in your life. We are not like those who have no hope. and while we mourn when a loved one dies, **we can also rejoice because Jesus’ bringing us eternal life is at the centre of our faith.** So, of course we miss the person who has passed, but if that person has received Jesus as Saviour and Lord, he/she has certainly gone on to glory, and that’s something we can truly rejoice about. We drew from this passage last week, *Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord, I will say it again, rejoice!”*

“Why should we be joyful?” **First**, joy is a gift of God. **Second**, by sending Jesus, God’s given us a way to Him, He’s reconciled us to Himself through Jesus when we could never accomplish that on our own. **Third**, that reconciliation is eternal, forever. **Fourth**, God has demonstrated a love for us that is beyond belief, beyond comparison: He sent Jesus, Emmanuel —God with us—to die in our place. **Hebrews 12:2** is a most remarkable verse:

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.”

What more could He do? **If Jesus found joy in going to the cross for our benefit, surely we should have joy all the more for what He has done for us!**

Our opening hymn, “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night” exclaims, “Good tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind.” What can bring great joy to ALL mankind? Jesus. He came, as only He could, to remove our separation from God, to take away our sins and in their place to bring peace—His peace—for all people—something every one of us needs.

“Good Christians all Rejoice”—WHY? Well, look at the lyrics—in the first verse all nature bows down to the arrival of Emmanuel. In the second verse “endless bliss” is the reason Christ was born—does that sound like a joyful response? Jesus is the one who has “opened heaven’s door. In the third verse we’re reminded that we need not fear. It’s all about Jesus’ grace. Jesus was born to save—the hymn doesn’t even add the obvious—He was born to save “us”. And there’s the reminder that Jesus calls you; He calls us all—every one of us. That’s reason to rejoice!

We’re going to close with “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”. Jesus brings “Peace on earth and mercy mild with God and sinners reconciled.” **Peace on earth, mercy, reconciliation with God —are these not outstanding reasons to have joy?** “Joyful ALL ye nations rise” brings us back to the good news of Jesus birth—is for all the people. “**Join the triumph of the skies... Christ by highest heaven adored**”—if the angels are declaring this joy in the skies, should we not join with them? “**Christ the everlasting Lord**”—this is no short term fix. God has sent His “A” plan. There was never a “B” plan. This is great news and great reason for joy! “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel”—God is with us, God is for us! “Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings”—**Do you want light? Do you want life? He brings that to everyone. And with that He brings healing to our broken souls and bodies. Oh what joy!** “Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die.” **Jesus puts all of who He is—God—aside so that death no longer has any claim on us who believe.** Is anyone out there ready to rejoice—and never stop?

Take it to the street this week! It’s too awesome to sit quietly, passively, passionlessly. Rejoice, always! I will say it again, rejoice. And keep on rejoicing! Sing it. Speak it. Live it. **Amen.**