

Advent Means... JOY!

Advent Means... #3 - Pastor Gary Combs - December 17, 2023 - 1 Peter 1:3-9

INTRO: Good morning church! We are continuing our sermon series today entitled, "Advent Means ..." The short answer is: Advent means "coming" or "arrival." It's the Christmas season when believers look back to Christ's first arrival in Bethlehem and look forward to His second and future return through the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem.

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. The advent season includes the four Sundays before Christmas. The four Advent themes are: Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy. Today's message is "**Advent Means... JOY!**"

After all, isn't "joy" supposed to be what the Christmas season is about? Isn't it why we say, "Merry Christmas?" BTW, have you ever wondered why we say, "MERRY Christmas?" Why not, "HAPPY Christmas?"

Many credit the continuing popularity of Charles Dicken's, *A Christmas Carol*, and the Victorian era Christmas traditions it typifies with popularizing the phrase. First published in 1843, ironically the same year that the phrase appeared in the first Christmas Cards printed in London, it became the preferred Christmas greeting in the English speaking world after Ebenezer Scrooge was finally won over to it.



It took some doing for Scrooge to get into the "Merry Christmas" spirit though... The cynical Ebenezer rudely deflected the friendly greeting and brooded on the foolishness of those who uttered it.



"If I could work my will," said Scrooge, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding."

But after the Spirits of Christmas effected his transformation, he was finally able to heartily exchange the wish with all he met, saying, "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody!"



After which Scrooge learned to laugh again. Dickens described it ... "It was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!"

Need: Have you forgotten how to laugh? Perhaps you're suffering from the spirit of Scrooge this Christmas? You're not alone. According to psychologists, Americans miss more work, and complain of a myriad of more health problems that really relate to clinical depression. America, the land where the "pursuit of happiness" is guaranteed by our Constitution, is filled with depressed people. Americans are increasingly unhappy, especially at Christmas. Why is everyone so discouraged?

Trans: Why aren't we experiencing the "great joy" that the angels promised at Christ's birth?

Luke 2:10-11 (ESV) 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 this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Perhaps we're unhappy because we've misunderstood the difference between happiness and joy. Because joy is better than happiness. Happiness depends upon favorable happenings. It comes from the word "hap" which means "luck, happenstance"; you're just lucky, fortunate, and happy. Happiness is external; joy is internal. Happiness is based on circumstances and when they change, you're not happy anymore. But joy is based on Christ. Happiness is based on chance; joy is based on Christ. The Advent season is an invitation for us to consider the promise of joy found only in Christ.

BODY: In Peter's first epistle, he encouraged the dispersed believers throughout Asia Minor to find their true joy in Christ. We can find our true joy in Christ. How can we find our true joy in Christ? The text gives three ways we can find our true joy in Christ.

Read text: 1 Peter 1:3-9 (ESV) ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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HOW WE CAN FIND TRUE JOY IN CHRIST:

1. By rejoicing in our security in Christ.

EXP: (3-6a) Circle the words “rejoice” (6,8) and “joy” (8). Peter says, “Rejoice in this!” In what? In a heavenly inheritance that is “kept” (4) for you and in that you are being “guarded” (5) by God’s power until the day of salvation at Christ’s return. This is the security of the believer. You can rejoice in this!

“Rejoice” (6,8) (ἀγαλλιάω, *agalliaō*) - to exult, rejoice exceedingly, exceeding glad. Exult, jump for joy!

“Kept” (4) (τηρέω, *tēreō*) - to keep, reserve, watch, preserve, hold fast.

“Inheritance” (4) (κληρονομία, *klēronomia*) - inheritance, the consummated kingdom of God which is ours. Eternal life in the Kingdom. Three features: 1) “imperishable” - immortal, incorruptible, cannot decay. 2)

“undefiled” - unsoiled, pure, without defect, and 3) “unfading” - not fading, perennial. The perennial flowering plant called the “amaranth” comes from the Greek for “unfading” (ἀμάραντος *amárantos*).

“Guarded” (5) (φρουρέω, *phroureō*) - to guard, watch, hem-in, protect by a military garrison.

“God’s power” (5) (δύναμις, *dunamis*) - strength power, ability; inherent power.

“Revealed” (5) (ἀποκαλύπτω, *apokaluptō*) - to uncover, unveiled, reveal. Christ’s 2nd advent.

ARG: This joy comes from abiding in Christ. Christ says, “My joy.” This joy is Christ in you!

John 15:9-11 (ESV) As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love... These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

What you “treasure” affects the joy in your heart. It is treasuring Christ that brings true joy!

Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV) ¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

ILL: Hitching our happiness to the world, we depend on perishable, defiled, and fading things:

“Recent retirees are grappling with the triple threat of a losing stock market, declining bond prices, and high inflation. This has shrunk their retirement nest eggs and reduced their spending power just as they are embarking on retirement.” (<https://www.morningstar.com/retirement/how-worried-should-new-retirees-be-about-market-losses-high-inflation>)

APP: Rejoice in your inheritance and in your salvation, kept and guarded in Christ. We can stop hitching our happiness to worldly things. We can rejoice in the security and assurance we have in Christ Jesus!

2. By rejoicing in our sanctification in Christ.

EXP: (6-7) We can almost hear 1st century believers saying, “But Peter, it’s hard to find joy when we’re ‘grieved by various trials.’” Peter anticipated this objection, encouraging them to rejoice knowing that such grief was both temporary (“little while”) and necessary. Why? For our sanctification (“tested genuineness”).

“Little while” (6) (ὀλίγος *oligos*) - brief, a short season, little, a little while.

“If necessary” (6) (δεῖ, *dei*) - it is necessary, need of, necessity lying in the nature of the case.

“Grieved” (6) (λυπέω, *lupeō*) - to make sorrowful, sadness, cause grief, to throw into sorrow, to grieve.

“Trials” (6) (πειρασμός, *peirasmos*) - to put to the test by adversity, affliction, trouble. Trials, temptations.

“Tested genuineness” (7, 2x) (δοκίμιον, *dokimion*) - to test, examine, prove, (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals, to recognize as genuine after examination. “Tested by fire” This is necessary.

“Your faith” (7) (πίστις, *pistis*) - faith, assurance, believe, conviction of the truth of a thing. Untested faith is unproven faith. But proven faith results in “praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

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ARG: **Sanctification means...** to be made holy, set apart unto God, becoming like Christ. It is granted us at salvation (justification) and continues to maturity until you are like Christ in every way. Sanctification is completed by God at Christ's return (glorification). We are to pursue sanctification by God's work in us.

Since we know these trials are temporary and necessary for our maturity, "count it all joy!"

James 1:2-4 (ESV) ² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

ILL: In his book, The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence, a monk who lived and worked in a monastery for 50 years in the 1600s, wrote about how to practice the presence of walking in God's great love and joy. Quotes from his book: "If we renounce ourselves, we'll know unspeakable joy. Always turn to Jesus Christ, asking him for his grace that makes everything easy. Give yourself completely to him. Abandon yourself to him. Find joy in doing his will, in all circumstances. Suffering and joy are synonymous to someone yielded to God. Ground yourself in God's presence by continually conversing with him. Nourish your soul by focusing your mind on God's glory. Accept the joy that comes from spending time with him."

APP: We can rejoice in times of grief, knowing that God never wastes a hurt, but works all things together for good (Rom. 8:28) for us, making us more like Jesus. We can rejoice in becoming more like Jesus!

3. By rejoicing in our splendor in Christ.

EXP: (7-9) This joy is "not seen" (8) now. But it will be soon be seen at the "revelation" (7) of Jesus. In anticipation of this future advent, we "rejoice with joy" that is "inexpressible" and "filled with glory" (or splendor). Because we are filled with "love" for Christ and we "believe" in Him, we have this joy!

"Have not seen ... do not now see" (8) - Those Peter wrote to had not seen Christ at His first advent, nor could they see Him now, yet they loved Him and believed in Him and rejoiced in Him with great...

"Joy" (8) (χαρά, *chara*) - gladness, greatly or exceeding joy(-ful, -fully, -fulness, -ous)

"Inexpressible" (8) (ἀνεκλάλητος, *aneklalētos*) - not spoken out, (by implication) unutterable, unspeakable

"Glory" (7, 8) (δοξάζω, *doxazō*) - glorious, clothed with splendor. (With "praise and honor" - v7)

"Outcome of your faith" (9) - which is the ultimate salvation of your souls along with the "praise, glory and honor" (7) due those who have been found to have genuine, sanctified faith in Jesus at His return!

ARG: **It is the Lord who will present us blameless before Him with glory and great joy.**

Jude 24-25 (ESV) ²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time both now and forever. Amen.

ILL: **John leaps for Joy in his mother's womb:** Luke 1:39-45 ³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb **leaped for joy**. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

APP: We can rejoice with inexpressible joy filled with glory and splendor in Christ Jesus!

CONCLUSION: Advent means... JOY! Happiness is depends on chance, but joy, true joy, depends on Christ. We can know this joy in Christ by rejoicing... 1) In our security in Christ, 2) Our sanctification in Christ, and 3) Our splendor in Christ. Let's pray.