

Advent 2020 Week Three:
Finding JOY in Our Discouragements
Sunday, December 13, 2020

“Today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent. The Advent season comprises the four weeks before Christmas. It is an old tradition dating at least as far back as the 400’s when the early church observed a period of preparation leading up to Christmas. Advent is a time when we prepare our hearts and our minds for the coming of God’s Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. The word “Advent” means “to come,” and the Advent season focuses on remembering Christ’s first coming at Christmas and then also anticipating Christ’s second coming and soon return”. (Ray Fowler)

This Advent season we will be sharing a series of messages exploring the various themes represented by the five candles. The Key Concepts are HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE, and the fifth candle is the Christ Candle that brings all the previous 4 together into ONE.

This year our Advent theme is...
(adapted from Outreach.com 2020 Advent Theme)

Rediscovering Thankfulness This Christmas Season

Week 1: Finding Hope in Our Uncertainties

Week 2: Finding Peace in Our Struggles

WEEK 3: FINDING JOY IN OUR DISCOURAGEMENTS

Week 4: Finding Love in Our Differences

Week 5: Finding Christ in Our World

I want to introduce you to a song that will be used each week of this series each week that reinforces the theme. (It is an adaption from the song “My Heart is Filled With Thankfulness. Words and music by Keith Getty/Stuart Townend. 2003 ThankYou Music.)

MY HEART IS FILLED WITH THANKFULNESS

Week 1: HOPE

My heart is filled with thankfulness To Christ Who brings me **HOPE**
In all of life’s uncertainties, His promises are sure.
In Christ I find the strength to wait, and pow’r to stay the course;
Sustaining me with arms of love and crowning me with grace

Week 2: PEACE

My heart is filled with thankfulness To Christ Who Brings me **PEACE**
In all our struggles gives us strength and causes fears to cease.
Whose ev’ry promise is enough for ev’ry step I take;
Sustaining me with arms of love and crowning me with grace

Week 3: JOY

My heart is filled with thankfulness To Christ Who Brings me **JOY**
In all of my discouragements, His presence is enough.
I celebrate the blessed Christ, and know for sure He is,
Sustaining me with arms of love and crowning me with grace.

Week 4: LOVE

My heart is filled with thankfulness To Christ Who Brings me **LOVE**
Whose presence brings me **Hope** and **Peace**, and fills my life with **Joy**
For ev’ry day I have on earth Is showered in His **Love**
So I will give my life, my all To love and follow Him
Oh to love and follow Him

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As is our tradition we will ask a member to come and light the 1st & 2nd Candle and read a scripture and lead us in a prayer.

The 3rd Advent candle represents JOY. Joy is an important theme relating to Christmas, and especially relating to the Advent season leading up to Christmas. Our world is in desperate need of genuine JOY. Christ came at Christmas to bring us this JOY, and that is what we want to see in the Scriptures this morning.

Week Three Advent Reading and Candle Lighting : JOY

Luke 1:26-33...²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" ²⁹ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Prayer:

O Father in Heaven, we thank you and join our voices with the Angels for this special time of rejoicing over the Joy that has been given to us in Jesus. May we share this Joy with all we meet and let others know that the true reason for Christmas is Jesus. May we not let the discouragements that we face each day rob of us the Hope, Peace and Joy that is found in Jesus. In the precious Name of Jesus I pray. Amen

WEEK 3: FINDING JOY IN OUR DISCOURAGEMENTS

Luke 2: 8-13...⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

James 1:2-4...² Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

What we all need this Christmas Season is not simply happiness; what we need is Real JOY.

"JOY" is the positive confidence I feel from KNOWING and TRUSTING God, regardless of circumstances

Three Joy-Killing Attributes

1. **SELFISHNESS** - "I want it my way" Selfishness is saying, I want what I want and you want what you want and we don't get along together

JAMES 4:1,2 ... "Where do all the fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires... which are constantly fighting with your bodies... you strongly desire things but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. "

Root problem many relationships : power struggle-2 insecure people "I have my rights" Instead of complimenting... competing

What causes this? Self-centered insecurity

SELFISHNESS is a self-centeredness that leads to a lack of confidence in the PROVISION of GOD.

JAMES 3:16... *For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.* (NLT)

Can't be joyful and jealous at the same time
Selfishness undermines relationships
Want to put Joy back in relationships
Get the focus off yourself!

Remember the acrostic
J – Jesus O – Others Y – Yourself

SELFISHNESS is a self-centeredness that leads to a lack of confidence in the PROVISION of GOD.

2. **RESENTMENT** -

HEB 12:15... *See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness or resentment springs up and causes trouble, and thus defiling many others.* (DSV)

“We hurt each other in relationships, sometimes intentionally, sometime unintentionally. Because you deal with human beings, we misunderstand each other, we have conflict. You're going to be hurt in relationships -- it's a fact of life. What you do with that hurt makes a difference whether you're joyful or you're miserable.

Nothing destroys a relationship faster than resentment. Nothing destroys joy faster” .

RESENTMENT is a self-centeredness that leads to a lack of understanding of the PARDON of GOD

3. **FEAR** *"I don't trust you"* Maybe because you've been hurt. When fear builds up in your life, the joy goes out of the relationship.

Prov. 12:25... *Anxiety, fear and worry in one's heart weighs it down, but a good word cheers it up.*

Fear causes us to build walls instead of bridges. We cover up and won't let people get close to us.

1 JOHN 4:18... *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

Fearful people cannot give/receive love **"afraid I'll be hurt again" and it diminishes their Joy!**

	FEAR MAKES YOU
Defensive	won't admit faults
Distant	won't share feelings
Demanding	must be in control, get your way

FEAR is a self-centeredness that leads to a lack of trust in the POWER of GOD

Three Joy Building Attributes

1. **FOCUS ON GIVING RATHER THAN RECEIVING** = The Antidote to Selfishness

ACTS 20:35... *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

Bible: God is Love. .. a Giver "every gift"

- You are most like God when...
- You can give w/o loving but...

TRUTH: A lot that is called "love"- isn't! Love=giving
lust=get
Why so many marriages falling apart at an alarming rate?: Culture built on: "What's in it for me?"

I love you *because... if... period*

Problem: after a while...take our relationships for granted.
(don't put- same effort)

Wonder why there's no joy? You've shifted your focus to" let's serve me!!"

Joy: comes from making others happy!

2. **FOCUS ON HEALING RATHER THAN HURTING** – The Antidote to Resentment

You WILL be hurt by relationships..
misunderstanding, conflict, jealousy, inconsiderate...

Human nature: We HOLD ON to hurt- rather than releasing it!
Example: Someone slanders you- you repeat it in mind!

COL 3:13... *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

There's no value in rehearsing pain over & over.
For you own sake- quit reliving it! Choose to release it!

ROM. 5:2-5 – *And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

Easier to handle a hurt when know God can use it in your life!
God has a positive purpose behind...

3. **FOCUS ON GOD'S POWER, RATHER THAN MY PROBLEM** – The antidote to Fear

Psalms 62:8 *"Trust in God at all times; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge."*

"God is in control. He can repair the unrepairable. He can control the uncontrollable. He can help you where it doesn't look like there's any hope in the situation. He'll help you if you trust Him. If you let Him into your life, focus on His power rather than your problem, you will have joy. If you focus on your problem, you're going to be miserable. If God can raise Jesus Christ from the dead, He can raise a dead relationship. He can give you the power to start over. God is the God of the second chance. He can rebuild trust where there's only been fear". (Warren, Rick)

Psalms 56:3... *"When I am afraid, I will trust in You."*
How often am I to be joyful?

PHIL. 4:4... *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. In good times"?*

3 Joy Assuring Attributes

We can have victory over selfishness, resentment and fear and experience a life of Joy...

1. **BECAUSE GOD IS WITH US**

Isaiah 43:2... *"When you pass through deep waters I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through the fire, you will not be burned, the hard trials that come will not hurt you. For I am the Lord your God!"*

FACT: You will *never* go thru any problem alone! So nothing can overwhelm..

Psalms 16:11... *You reveal the path of life to me; in Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.*

If lose joy – it is a warning light that you might not be spending enough time with God!

2. **BECAUSE GOD HAS A PLAN FOR US**

Jeremiah 29:11-13... ¹¹ *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.*

God isn't caught off guard and fretting about the problem you're going thru. He knew it was coming. *"All things work together..."*

3. BECAUSE GOD WILL HELP US

Psalms 46:1-7... ¹ *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

² *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*

³ *though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging*

⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

⁵ *God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*

⁶ *Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; He lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

⁷ *The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

God will always be there for us, no matter what. It is up to us to TRUST & OBEY and let the Love of God allow Joy to flow in and through us.

John 15:9-11... ⁹ *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

Q: Have you lost your joy? Tired of being miserable? Are you discouraged over a relationship?

God is waiting for you to ask for help!

John 16: 22-24... ²² *Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. ²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.*

JOY is a result of letting the Spirit of Christ live in you!

You can't produce it on your own But with Christ in you—same joy...

The greatest advertisement for Christ is a joyful Christian The mark of a genuine Christian.

ILL: 1st thing angels said at Jesus' birth "Good News of great joy!"

CHOOSE JOY -

Joy-a-Thon Scripture Read (NIV)

- 1. Habakkuk 3:17-18...** Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.
- 2. 1 Peter 1:8-9 ...** Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
- 3. Isaiah 61:10** ... I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns His head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- 4. Philippians 4: 4-7...** ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let

your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

5. **James 1: 2-4...**² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
6. **Psalm 47:1-5...**¹ Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. ² For the LORD Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth. ³ He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. ⁴ He chose our inheritance for us, whom he loved. ⁵ God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets. ⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.
7. **Romans 15:5-7, 13...**⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had ⁶ so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. ...¹³ 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.
8. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-24...**¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil. ²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Additional Reading

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<http://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/five-candles-at-christmas/advent-candle-of-joy/>

FIVE CANDLES AT CHRISTMAS (An Advent Wreath Sermon Series)

“The Advent Candle of Joy” ([Luke 2:8-12](#))

“Today is the third Sunday of Advent, and we are working our way around the various candles of the Advent Wreath. We have seen that the first candle represents hope, and the second candle represents peace. Today we come to the third candle on the wreath.

Now you may have noticed that one of the outside candles is a different color from the other three. There are three purple candles around the outside of the wreath and one pink candle. The pink candle is the third candle of advent which represents joy.

The traditional reading for the third Sunday of Advent comes from [Philippians 4:4](#) which says: “Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again, rejoice!” As a result, the third Sunday of Advent was set aside as a special Sunday, often called Gaudete Sunday after the Latin word for “rejoice.”

We will be looking at a number of Scriptures this morning relating to Christmas and joy, but we will begin with these verses from Luke 2. (Read [Luke 2:8-12](#))

One of the things people love about Christmas is that it truly is a joyful season. All season long we celebrate with music and song and lights and decorations. We celebrate by getting together with family and friends and by exchanging gifts. It is a joyful time of year. But I can't help feeling that sometimes the world hijacks their joy in the season from the true joy at the center of Christmas. Because when you come right down to it, the real joy at Christmas comes not from the lights and the decorations and the music but from the meaning of Christmas.

At the heart of Christmas is the astoundingly good news that Jesus Christ was born as a Savior into this world. From beginning to end the

Christmas story is punctuated with various outbursts and moments of joy, and they all center around the birth of Christ. You can't get away from it. You can't get around it. You can't spell Christmas without Christ, and you can't enter into the true joy of the season without Jesus. This morning I want us to consider three truths about joy at Christmas. 1) Jesus brings the joy of salvation. 2) Joy leads to proclamation. 3) Joy leads to praise. All three of these truths are found right in the very Scripture passages which tell us the Christmas story, and so all three of these truths together capture the true meaning of joy at Christmas.

I. Jesus brings the joy of salvation

– Psalm 51:12; Isaiah 12:3; Matthew 2:9-10; Luke 1:39-45

First of all, Jesus brings the joy of salvation. Now Jesus brings joy in so many areas of life, but the joy that is especially associated with Christ's birth is the joy of salvation. We already saw last week that Jesus' very name means salvation, and this week I want us to see the connection that the Bible makes between salvation and joy.

For example, we read David's prayer to the Lord in Psalm 51:12: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation." (Psalm 51:12) David wrote this Psalm after committing adultery with Bathsheba. David had sinned greatly against God, but he still understood the connection between salvation and joy. He repented of his sin. He asked God's forgiveness and asked God to restore to him the joy of his salvation.

We find the same connection between salvation and joy in Isaiah 12:3 where Isaiah writes: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3) What a beautiful image! In this passage Isaiah is prophesying about the second coming of Christ, which as we have seen is a large part of the focus of the Advent season. Advent not only reminds us of Christ's first coming, but also helps us as we anticipate Christ's second coming.

Last week we looked at Isaiah 11 where we saw that when Christ returns he will bring peace on earth, a peace that includes not only peace among the nations but extends even to nature and the animal kingdom. Now Isaiah follows that up with Isaiah 12 by speaking of God's salvation and the joy that accompanies his salvation.

There is no true joy without salvation, and there is no true salvation without joy. The two go together, and they especially go together in those Scriptures which tell us the Christmas story.

For example, we read in the gospel of Luke how when Mary was pregnant with Jesus she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was also pregnant at this time with John the Baptist. We read in Luke 1: At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" (Luke 1:39-45)

I love this scene. Mary enters the house, and John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb, starts jumping for joy! Why? Because as Elizabeth put it, Mary was the mother of her Lord! Jesus is Lord, Mary was Jesus' mother, and John was in close proximity with Jesus who had come to bring salvation for his people. And so John begins jumping with joy in his mother's womb.

And you might wonder, how is that possible? Well, it's because he was filled with the Holy Spirit. You have two of the members of the Trinity here in one house. You have God the Spirit filling John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb and God the Son growing as a child in Mary's womb.

Now the Holy Spirit's role is to glorify Jesus as Savior. That's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit's job is to get excited about Jesus! And so when Jesus enters the house in Mary's womb, John the Baptist who is filled with the Holy Spirit gets excited about Jesus because the Savior has come.

Another great example of Jesus bringing the joy of salvation is the wise men in the gospel of Matthew. They traveled a great distance just to see the Messiah and to worship him. They had seen his star in the east, but they didn't know exactly where he was to be born, so they stopped in Jerusalem along the way to ask King Herod for additional information. We read in Matthew 2:

"After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed." (Matthew 2:9-10)

Once again they rejoiced to find the place where Jesus was born. Why? Because Jesus was the Messiah who had come to bring salvation to his people.

Salvation and joy belong together, and joy and Christmas belong together, because Jesus came at Christmas to bring us joy, especially the joy of salvation. So that's our first point this morning. Jesus brings the joy of salvation.

II. Joy leads to proclamation

– Luke 2:8-12, 15-18

Secondly, joy leads to proclamation. Jesus brings the joy of salvation, and that joy leads us to share the good news of Jesus with others. We find this truth demonstrated for us in the story of the angels and the shepherds. For example, we read in Luke 2:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

(Luke 2:8-12)

Notice the news about Jesus' birth is not only news, it is good news!

And it is not only good news, it is good news of joy! And it is not only good news of joy, it is good news of great joy! And it is not only good news of great joy, it is good news of great joy for all the people! But how will all the people know about this good news of great joy unless we share it with them?

We share good news with each other all the time. When something good happens, we talk about it with our friends at work or at school. We post it on Facebook. When the good news is the birth of a baby, we especially share it with others, don't we? We take pictures and send out birth announcements. We are filled with joy at the birth of a child, and that joy naturally leads to proclamation. We want everyone to know and share in our joy.

Well, if we tell everyone about the birth of our own babies, how much more should we proclaim the birth of God's Son! Good news is for sharing, and there is no better news than the news the angels shared with the shepherds that first Christmas Eve: “Today in the town of

David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11)

So what did the shepherds do after they received this good news of great joy that was for all the people? Let's find out! Picking up the story in Luke 2:15:

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.” (Luke 2:15-18)

When the shepherds heard this good news of great joy that was for all the people, first they checked it out for themselves and found everything just as the angel had told them. And after they had checked it out for themselves, what did they do? They spread the word to others. Why? Because good news is for sharing! This was good news of great joy for all the people, and it would have been wrong for them to keep it to themselves. Joy leads to proclamation.

III. Joy leads to praise

– Luke 1:46-49, 2:20

1) Jesus brings the joy of salvation. 2) Joy leads to proclamation. And then thirdly: 3) Joy leads to praise. We find this truth demonstrated for us in two examples from the Christmas story. The first example is Mary after she hears the words of prophecy from Elizabeth that we looked at earlier in the message. Mary was filled with joy and wonder as her cousin Elizabeth spoke words of blessing and favor over her and the child she carried in her womb. Her joy could not be contained, and so then she burst out in a song of praise.

And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.” (Luke 1:46-49)

We often call this “Mary's Song” or “The Magnificat,” as Mary magnifies or glorifies the Lord for choosing her to be the mother of Jesus. And notice that this joy still has to do with salvation. Mary

rejoices in God her Savior. She is filled with joy at God's goodness to her, and her joy bubbles over into praise.

And then we find this same pattern also with the shepherds when they returned from sharing the good news of Jesus with the people in the town. We read in Luke 2:20:

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:20)

Joy leads to proclamation, so they went out and spread the word about Jesus and his birth. But joy also leads to praise, and so they returned glorifying and praising God. God chose them to be eyewitnesses to the birth of Christ, and they would never forget the things they had heard and seen that night, which were just as they had been told.

CONCLUSION: And so the third candle, the pink candle, the advent candle of joy reminds us of these three important aspects of joy relating to Christmas. 1) Jesus brings the joy of salvation. 2) Joy leads to proclamation. 3) Joy leads to praise. And these three aspects of joy at Christmas also become three application points for us as we respond to the message this morning.

First of all, Jesus brings the joy of salvation. Do you know Christ as your Savior? Do you know the joy that comes from having Christ as your friend and having your sins forgiven? Do you know the joy of being restored to right relationship with God through Christ the Savior? The message that the angel gave to the shepherds that first Christmas night is just as applicable to you two thousand years later, right here, right now: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11) There is no true joy without salvation, and there is no true salvation without joy. Jesus is the reason for the season, and if you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, then you are missing out on the true joy of Christmas.

Secondly, joy leads to proclamation. If you do know Jesus as your Savior, then you need to spread the word! How many people have you told about Jesus this Christmas season? You don't need to be a trained theologian to share Christ with others. Just tell them that Christmas is all about the birth of Christ who came to be our Savior. Tell them Jesus died on the cross for their sins so they could be forgiven. Tell them Jesus rose from the dead and that he is alive today. Tell them Jesus is coming back to bring peace on earth. That's all very good news, and

remember, good news is for sharing. If you know Jesus as your Savior, then you know the joy of salvation, and joy leads to proclamation. And then finally joy leads to praise. Praise God every day for your salvation. Praise him for his amazing grace. Praise him for his great love in sending his Son, Jesus, to be your Savior. Praise him for his goodness and kindness in forgiving your sins. Praise him for the miracle of the incarnation at Christmas, that God the Son took on human flesh and was born into our world as a little baby. Remember Isaiah 12:3: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3) And so let me encourage you this morning, with great joy draw great buckets of praise from the great reservoir of blessings that God has given you in your salvation.

Are you filled with joy this Christmas season? You should be! Because God is good, Christ has come, and salvation is yours for the asking. Christmas is all about joy, because joy comes from Jesus, and Christmas is all about him.

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