

Did you know . . .

Third Sunday of Advent

On the third Sunday of Advent the pink candle is lit, symbolizing JOY. It is the Shepherd's candle, reminding us of the joy the world experienced at the coming birth of Jesus.

From Psalm 5:11, we hear these words: "Then all who take refuge in you will be glad and forever shout for joy. Protect them that you may be the joy of those who love your name."

"Joy is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing. **Joy** in the New Testament is virtually always used to signify a feeling of "happiness" that is based on spiritual realities (and independent of what "happens"). **Joy** is an inner gladness; a deep seated pleasure. It is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful heart."

It is from the Greek *chará* and the Latin *gaudium*. There is no explicit difference between joy and happiness, although some philosophers dispute this, there is no distinction between the two made in Scripture.

Joy is essential to the Christian life. The Scriptures are clear: God's people are both commanded to rejoice and characterized by rejoicing.

Joy is commanded throughout the Bible. It was commanded of God's first-covenant people, Israel, perhaps especially in the Psalms. "Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!" (Psalm 149:2). "Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad" (Psalm 14:7). "Rejoice in the Lord" (Psalm 97:12). "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Psalm 32:11). With many more instances throughout the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, God also commands our joy: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matthew 5:12). "Leap for joy" (Luke 6:23). "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

Prayer

Too often, we think joy is something big, O God. A brass band or a parade can certainly bring us joy. Just as easily and far more often, we can feel joy in a hug or the squeeze of a hand, we can see joy in a smile or hear it in laughter. Help us to not overlook the simple joys that peak into our lives daily. This week in our Advent journey, open our eyes to the joy that surrounds us. Amen. [Liturgylink Nov. 2014]

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