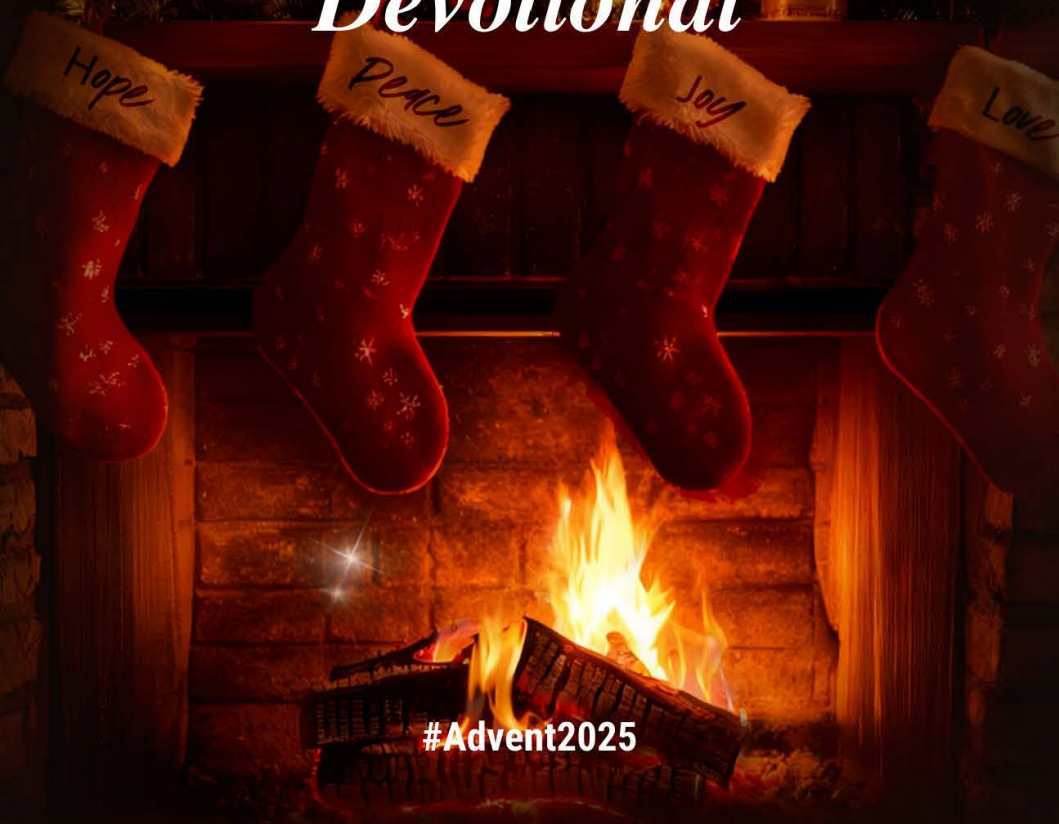


Stocking Stuffers

GIFTING THE THEMES OF ADVENT

Devotional



#Advent2025

Stocking Stuffers

GIFTING THE THEMES OF ADVENT

Week 3

The Gift of Joy

SERMON NOTES

Scripture Psalm 146:4-9

Title THE GIFT OF JOY

NOTES

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

JOY IN THE DESERT

Isaiah 35:1-10

*There can be joy even in a desert,
because the Christ is coming.*

DEVOTION

Isaiah gives us an image of beauty: “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.” The people of Israel had been exiled, and were in despair. They had felt the barrenness of death in their spirits.

But the Lord will restore life. He will bring joy to the desert. Where there was death, there will be the abundance of life. The wilderness will be a place of gladness instead of sorrow.

Advent reminds us that our joy does not depend on our circumstances, but on the presence and promises of God.

There can be joy even in a desert, because the Christ is coming. He will bring healing to our brokenness, rest to our weary spirits, and a highway of holiness for His redeemed people. This is not a shallow happiness; but a deep, abiding joy that springs from the hope we have in Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the springs of joy which break up even in the desert places of life. Help us to believe Your promises and to tread the highway of holiness with gladness. May our hearts rejoice in looking for the coming of Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FINDING JOY WHILE WAITING!

James 5:7-11

Even in seasons of difficulty, there is joy, because God is at work, and His blessings will come at the appointed time.

DEVOTION

For many, the season of Christmas is the long-awaited time of year to rejoice, celebrate with family, and remember the sacred birth of our Savior. Yet before we reach this blessed season, we must first journey through the seasons that precede it. These seasons often bring uncertainty, heartbreak, and even despair. They have a way of leaving us spiritually weary and emotionally drained. Still, the anticipation of Christmas shines brightly because we know something greater is coming.

James writes to believers who also found themselves waiting—enduring hardship and oppression. He points them to the example of the farmer who knows that each season brings its own rain. The early rains nurture the seed so it may sprout, while the later rains strengthen the crop and prepare it for harvest. In the same way, James reminds us that our waiting is never in vain. **Even in seasons of difficulty, there is joy, because God is at work, and His blessings will come at the appointed time.** God hears every cry, and though His answers may not arrive when we expect, they always come in His perfect way.

James did not want his readers to waste their days in misery but to use the season of waiting productively, trusting that God would move on their behalf. Waiting is not passive; it is a season of preparation, faith, and hope.

There is also joy while we wait because we do not wait alone. As members of the body of Christ, we stand together, encouraging one another and ensuring that no brother or sister is left behind. Our waiting becomes a communal journey, where joy is multiplied as we share faith and hope together.

Ultimately, our joy in waiting rests on the certainty that a greater blessing is coming. Just as the farmer trusts the rains will yield a harvest, we trust that God will provide in His season. Joy comes when we faithfully do our part, and then God sends His rain. Our harvest is not merely earthly blessing, but the Savior Himself—bringing grace, salvation, and eternal hope.

Prayer

Lord thank you for the Joy we have in you! In this moment and season renew in us a joy that can not be undone regardless of life's obstacles and distractions. Show us how to endure the seasons of life and find joy while waiting for harvest. We praise you in advance for the rains that will be sent to sustain and nurture us. In Jesus' name, Amen

JOY IN THE PROMISE

Matthew 11:2-11

DEVOTION

Our joy is not shaken by unmet expectations when it is rooted in the unshakable promises of Christ.

As we continue through the Advent season, we turn our hearts toward joy, a joy that is not rooted in circumstances but in Christ Himself. In Matthew 11, we find John the Baptist in a difficult place, locked in prison, facing uncertainty, and wrestling with doubt. John had faithfully proclaimed that the Messiah was coming, that judgment was near, and that God's deliverer would arrive. But now, hearing about Jesus' ministry, he begins to wonder: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

It's not that John stopped believing in the Messiah, but it's that Jesus didn't look like the Messiah he expected. John anticipated fire and judgment, but Jesus came with grace and love. But listen, Jesus' works were proof that God's promises had arrived, just in a different way than John had imagined.

And I believe that is true for us as well! Sometimes joy is hard to grasp when God doesn't move the way we thought He would. Our expectations can trip us up if we're not careful. But Jesus' clarification to John reminds us that our joy isn't in how things look, rather it's in knowing that God always fulfills His promises, even if He does it differently than we expect.

This Advent season, we have confirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised One who brings life, healing, and salvation. John could face prison and even death with joy because he was certain that what he believed and what God had promised was true. And that same certainty should anchor us in joy today.

You may not be where you want to be this season. Circumstances may not look like what you expected. But remember that **our joy is not shaken by unmet expectations when it is rooted in the unshakable promises of Christ.**

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the joy that is found in Christ alone. Help us not to stumble when You move in ways that we don't expect, but to trust that every promise You've made is true. May our joy rest not in what we see, but in who You are. In Jesus, the One who was, and is, and is to come! In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE THREAD THAT RUNS THROUGH

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

This Advent season transform your mind away from the negative to the positive.

DEVOTION

In culture the word “always” has more of a negative overtone than positive. Cries of always broke, busted and disgusted form a heaviness that was never meant to be carried upon the shoulders of these corruptible bodies. It can be mind-boggling.

This Advent season transform your mind away from the negative to the positive. Apostle Paul pens exhortations or commands that can evolve our faith in Christ at every junction of life. There is no end to the thread that is interwoven in each, the will of God. Nothing is disqualified nor out of range.

The command in verse 16 is rejoice (be joyful) and the measuring rod is always. Rejoice is in the present tense and doesn't stop. It is powered by the will of God. A line has been drawn in the sand of choices. One side gloom the other capacity in Christ to live in joy. Exercise your freedom (Gal. 5:1).

The command in verse 17 is pray and the measuring rod is constantly. This is relational going beyond form or format. Does prayer still come when there is no floor to kneel on, no hand to grab, no walls? Some of the best talks with God happen on the drive to the hospital, at the park, or being led to cancel unnecessary streaming services. Examine your attitude of prayer and adoration.

The command in verse 18 is give thanks and the measuring rod is in every thing. The preposition “in” is a marker of clarification for those bringing a charge against our God for being unrealistic. Things happen that is a fact. The Late Daryl Coley says it best, God can do whatever He wants to do, where He wants to, How He wants to, Because He's sovereign. Express your gratitude as life unfolds. You are not in control. Today, make a conscience effort to focus not on the unimaginable or familiar circumstances but on the provisions of God in Christ.

Prayer

Father, we want to praise you for constant care that is reliable and frees us to do your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH

Nehemiah 8:10

*Joy is not the absence of suffering.
Joy is the presence of God's grace.*

DEVOTION

For years the people of Israel had been living in exile. Now after years of wandering and hard work, the exiles had gathered together to listen to God's Word read aloud. As they listened, the people felt conviction and sorrow. They knew that they had strayed far from God's commands.

But Nehemiah and Ezra comforted the people. "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10) How powerful is that in Advent. Joy is not the absence of suffering. Joy is the presence of God's grace. The people are told to celebrate, eat good food, and rejoice. God is restoring them.

In Advent, we are told to rejoice. Not because everything is perfect and wonderful. But because Christ is here and will come again. His joy is our strength when we are weak and weary and overwhelmed.

Prayer

Lord, thank You that Your joy is our strength. Help us to rest in Your promises and celebrate Your goodness. May we share Your joy with others as we await the coming of Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REFLECTIONS