

Joy (Third Sunday of Advent)

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Date: 13 December 2020

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[4 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[7 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[10 : 29] Thank you.

I'm really not good.

And get some good.

Thank you.

And I just invite us to be in the Spirit.

[12 : 59] Thank you.

You may be seated.

Thank you.

And that which is, We have been in the Lord, and we cannot make a difference.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

[16 : 29] And what a promise.

And what a promise.

And what a promise.

And what a promise.

And what a promise.

[18 : 59] And what a promise.

And what a promise.

And what a promise.

And what a promise.

One of the things, and we're going to go, God bless you, God, and...

[22 : 29] At the same time, in this season of joy, we do recognize that there is much pain, there is much loss, and we know that God is with us through it all. And so we lift up our concerns to God in this time.

I want to especially point out Jack and Jane Smith were experiencing some physical difficulties, along with many, many others, and also pray for Lori Jagow's family. She has seven family members who have COVID, and Ben, her nephew, is especially not doing well.

So please lift the families in prayer. There's so much, so much pain going on, but again, we hold on to that joy and that hope in Christ. So let's come to the Lord in prayer. Holy God, we come before you because you are magnificent.

You are our healer. You are our savior. You are redeemer. You are the one who is present with us, bringing joy and hope and love and peace in all moments.

Lord, we lift up to you the concerns on our heart, the things we've been carrying as burdens that you have offered to take from us. Lord, we give them to you now. The people in need of healing, Lord, physically, we pray that your healing hand will be upon them, that they will experience your powerful healing, top of the head to the bottom of the feet, going all the way down.

[23 : 46] And Lord, we pray for your healing to come upon them, that they will be free from the things that ail them, free from the things that hurt them, that there'll be no more pain, no more disease.

We thank you, Lord, for the healing you're doing in the people. And Lord, we pray for your healing to manifest within our relationships, that if there be anything that's broken, anything that is crying out in relationships, Lord, that your grace will come and fill those broken spaces with your peace and your love, Lord.

Bind our families together. Bind the people together, the community, the nation, the world, Lord, in your peace, in your presence, Lord. Help us to be open to your presence in every moment, healing relationships with one another.

Lord, we pray that you will continue to guide us as a community of faith, to walk boldly in your will, to trust in you for all things, to experience your creativity, your imagination, your willingness to do things in a new and different way, Lord.

Lord, show us the way, give us your power and your strength to go there with you, to follow in all circumstances. We pray for those who are grieving. There is so much loss, Lord, and so many with heavy hearts.

[25 : 09] We pray for those who are grieving, grieving the loss of relationships, grieving the loss of people within their lives, grieving the loss of jobs, of finances, opportunities.

Lord, there's so much, but these are burdens that you said to give to you. We're giving all of these, Lord, to you. And we pray that you will come and dwell within us, surrounding us with your comfort, holding us tightly, helping us to lean into your loving arms, to move us through every moment, trusting in you, for you are good and you love us.

And we praise your holy name this day and every day. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Hello. Hope you're doing all right. Today's verses come from Isaiah and Luke. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favored, the Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

[27 : 05] But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever.

His kingdom will never end. How will this be, Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin? The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age.

And she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month, for no word from God will ever fail. I am the Lord's serpent, Mary answered.

[28 : 07] May your word to me be fulfilled. Then the angel left her. The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I've got that joy, joy, joy.

Where is it? Down in my heart. And I've got that joy, joy, joy. And where is it? Down in my heart. And I'm so happy, so very happy, I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

You know, that's a song for sometimes a different time. It's a song, and the reason I say that is because that is joy.

[29 : 20] That joy that is deep in our heart is the joy that we get to hold on to. The happy part, sometimes we haven't been seeing a lot of happy, happy, joy, joy in this season of Advent.

And you know what? Happiness and joy are two different things. Happy is in the moment, something that brings an instant smile to our face.

Joy is deep and profound. Where is the joy, we might ask? Where is the joy?

Did Mary feel joy at the time of this messenger arriving? Did she feel even vaguely happy, even if she didn't feel joy?

Probably not. The scripture tells us that she felt afraid, that she felt alarmed, that she felt unsure. And surely, the part where the messenger says, God has found favor with you, well, that might make her feel good.

[30 : 31] And then comes the word, you are going to give birth to a savior. Wait, what? Wait, what? Wait, what? So while Mary might have found a sense of affirmation in the message from God, she might have found that there was a deep sense of humble love and recognition in the fact that God had chosen her.

It wasn't a moment where she would write home about how she was dancing in the streets with joy. There is, and some of you might have heard this when you came in this morning, there is a piece of music.

It's called Ode to Joy. Anybody familiar with that? It is, in our hymnal, it's the tune that goes with love divine, all loves excelling.

But the Ode to Joy is part of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. So even if you're not a classical music fan, hear me out. In 1824, Beethoven wrote the Ninth Symphony, which includes, at the end of it, culminates with the Ode to Joy.

And so let's put that in context. When Beethoven wrote that Ninth Symphony, he was sick. He wasn't very far from dying.

[32 : 07] He was completely deaf. Can you imagine writing a great piece of music when you can't hear a thing? He was all alone in the world.

He had no wife. He had no family. He had alienated many people in his life. And I don't really know all the story behind that.

But what you hear is the sound of a very broken man. And yet, he wrote a piece of music that has transcended wars and conflict throughout history.

One of the early places that we hear how Ode to Joy, the Ninth Symphony, kind of transitioned from one place to another is in Japan.

In Japan, in the early 19, maybe 18-ish, which would have been World War I, they didn't have a lot of classical music in Japan.

[33 : 17] But as World War I was ramping up, they had a group of German soldiers that they took prisoner. And in that prison, where those German soldiers were held, they began to hear the Ninth Symphony.

Because these German prisoners knew the Ninth Symphony. They knew Ode to Joy. And so they started singing it. And then the Japanese soldiers tried to figure out, well, how can we get them instruments so that they can play this?

And by the time they were done, the Japanese adopted Ode to Joy, the Ninth Symphony, as a part of their story.

Even in World War I. In 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down, which had been a sign of separation and violence and all kinds of things, Leonard Bernstein conducted the Ninth Symphony as the wall was coming down.

And instead of the Ode to Joy, it was called an Ode to Freedom. In Tiananmen Square, when students were trying to find the ability to have any rights in this world.

[34 : 40] And it wasn't going to happen. They played Ode to Joy over the speakers in Tiananmen Square while the soldiers came in and took away their opportunity for freedom.

Now, in Japan, especially as the end of the year comes, and I asked myself, was Japan the first home of the flash mob?

And if you don't know what a flash mob is, it's when people just kind of, it looks random, show up and start playing an instrument and singing a song. But in Japan, there are times when thousands of people will join together and sing this part of the Ninth Symphony.

To think that Beethoven knew what this piece would do would be ludicrous. To think that this dying, lonely, disenfranchised, deaf man would know the power of this piece of music, it just wasn't the way it was.

So how is it that a piece of music can speak to brokenness between countries, across lands?

[36 : 04] How can that be? Well, in this time, when I think most of us would look around at our world and say, there's a lot of broken.

Am I right? When you look around at the world, do you see a lot of broken? Anybody? Yes? No? So what do we find?

Do we go to Ode to Joy? Well, if you're a classical music fan or you love that hymn, Love Divine, All Love's Excelling, which is quite healing and quite triumphant, then maybe that is where you go.

But where do we go? When, as we look around this world, things aren't the same. And we keep saying that week after week after week, I know.

But that's because it's true. Week after week after week. Things are not the same. And some things that are not the same have nothing to do with COVID. There are people who have lost loved ones that wasn't related to COVID, except for maybe how that life was celebrated.

[37 : 16] There are people whose marriages have ended. That is not probably a COVID thing. There are people whose jobs have disappeared. That probably is a COVID thing.

There are people in financial struggle that has always been the case, made worse this year. So what do we do?

Where do we find the hope, the healing, yes, the joy? That I've got the joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Where in this world do we find it?

So I want to introduce you to something that is, again, Japanese. And we'll get it up on the screen.

If you see this, this is actually a greeting card. In Japan, broken objects are often repaired with gold. The flaw is seen as a unique piece of the object's history, which adds to its beauty.

[38 : 20] Consider this when you feel broken. It's called kintsugi. And when a piece of pottery breaks that's of great importance, it's mended together with this tree sap lacquer and then dusted with either gold or silver or platinum.

And some people will say, well, you know, that gold, that platinum, that silver is pretty, but it's still broken. Friends, look at us. We break.

There are times in your life and mine when we break. And we look for where is the mending. Where is the mending?

Where is the healing? Where is the hope? Where is the love? Where is the joy? And part of where Mary found her trust, found the way, was to step away, go and visit Elizabeth, and start to realize the joy within her heart, her life, even her body, was that she was called to give birth to the greatest healer ever known, to the greatest love ever known, the greatest hope ever known.

And so there is that sense of a baby born to show us God's love, a baby who grew up to be a man, who knew what suffering was like and knew death, and yet in that resurrection, and because we are Easter Christians, even though it's Advent, we know how the story ends.

[40 : 10] We don't always know how this story is going to end for any of us individually other. And as you'll hear tonight, my proclamation and I think Kelly's proclamation are that next year this time, we will rise.

Music will be played. The orchestra will strike up the tune. And we will be gathered. We live in that hope, that resurrection hope, that while we can't know what's going to happen, we trust, we believe, because it's something deeper, something deeper than happy.

That joy, which is like that gold that mends the broken, is Jesus Christ. And nobody can take that. Even when we might remember this time of year, someone who should be here, should be sitting here with you.

And remembering is sometimes hard. And yet, if you attend a memorial service, a celebration of life that I do, one of the last things I say is, God's got eternal life covered, but we've got the job here.

It's our responsibility to keep telling the stories that remind us, this person was in my life.

[41 : 42] And this person blessed me. And this person blessed me. And my family. And I miss them terribly. And yet, I get to keep them alive in this moment, in this time, in the midst of chaos and craziness and loss.

I get to keep that joy, joy, joy, down in my heart. Why? Because I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

May it be so for us, because joy cannot be stolen. We cannot be robbed of that deep love for God, the deep love that God has for us and the special people in our lives.

Death might steal them for the moment, but they live forever within us. Let's pray. Oh, Lord, help us to look deep for the joy, the joy of each of us being anointed to bring good news, bring release to the captives.

Sometimes the captive is us. To release the prisoners. Sometimes the prisoners are those around us who feel trapped in the hopelessness of this time.

[43 : 14] Help us to reach down and get that joy. And even in the times when the tears roll down our face, may we hold your joy in our hearts.

Amen. It is a joy, a joy to be here in worship with all of you, a joy to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion together with one another.

The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to hear our name's prayer. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to raise our voices with you, tuning ourselves to you, creator of heaven and earth.

You filled the night of creation with music and light, setting in motion the rhythms of sunrise and sunset, of sound and silence. You formed within us your love song and breathed into us the breath of life.

Sometimes our voices are choked and we cannot find your melody, but you keep the bass line humming, waiting for us to rejoin the chorus. You show up in the worst of times, offering us the way to freedom in you.

[44 : 52] Your voice breaks through in prophets, whose songs wake us up to the kingdom you desire. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ. Breaking forth into light from the blessed darkness of a womb, he brought light that illumined a path so we could see our way to beloved community.

Your spirit anointed him to raise his voice, to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners and invited us to do the same. Born into a world of suffering, he suffered.

[46 : 07] Born into a world of senseless death, he died. Born into a world that needed hope, he rose, delivering us and proclaiming light and life, triumph for the living and the dead.

When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always in the power of your word and Holy Spirit, Holy Savior, lighting our way.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread. He gave thanks to you. He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said, Take and eat. This is my body, which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup and he gave thanks to you. And he gave it to his disciples and said, Drink from this, all of you.

This is the blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of this often, remembering me.

[47 : 13] And so in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us.

As we proclaim the mystery of faith, Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup.

Make them be for us your love and your light so that our hearts may be opened in service to you and to the world. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.

Mix our voices in harmony with each other until we sit at the same table and sing in the same choir in your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with your Holy Spirit, in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen. And now let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

[48 : 23] Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. And we will be receiving the elements in this time, so out of concern for our community, please take your masks off carefully.

and on the bottom half of this is the bread. The body of our Lord given for you.

And when the supper was over, he took the juice on the other side. The blood of our Lord poured out for you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[49 : 30] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. So if I can say it, you can say it. I'll say it and then you say it after me. I've got that joy, joy, joy. Down in my heart. Down in my heart.

Down in my heart. And I am so happy. And I am so happy. Because I have the love of Jesus in my heart. Because I have the love of Jesus in my heart.

[51 : 47] So, ham it up. Joy it up. And know that none of that can ever be taken away from you. Go in that peace.

Amen. Godless in my heart.

Durable, resilient Jugend birl sne Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[54 : 06] Thank you.

Thank you.