

December 15 Worship
3rd Sunday In Advent- Joy
Greeters- Linda Mikkola, Gayanne Boyer
Reader- Paul Mosher

Announcements/Joys-

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”* Psalm 32:11

Lighting of the 2nd Advent Candle-Hope- Stacy Family

Opening Scripture- Isaiah 12:2-6(page 596)

Opening Chorus- 120- O Come, O Come Emmanuel(verse 3)

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: Sing praises to God on high, for glorious are God’s works.

People: Sing praises to the ends of the earth.

Leader: Shout and sing for joy, O people of God.

People: For great is the Holy One in our midst,

All: Blessed is the One who comes to dwell among us.

Hymn- 58- Rejoice The Lord Is King

Unison Prayer- God, you are our salvation; we will trust and not be afraid. You, Lord God Adonai, are our strength and our song; you have become our salvation. With joy we draw water from the wells of salvation, for you, God, are our salvation. We drink from your fullness, from your freshness, from your replenishing depths. We pray as Jesus taught, saying...*Lord's Prayer.*

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,

World without end. Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Zephaniah 3:14-26(Page 816-817)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Luke 3:7-18(page 890-891)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 46- O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing

New Testament Scripture- Philippians 4:4-7(page1024)

Message

“Make A Joyful Noise”

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent and we have seen the candle of Joy shine its light into our sanctuary. What does Joy mean to us in the context of Christmas? For that matter, what does Joy mean to us in any context? Most of us put happiness and joy in the same framework of our lives. Is there a difference or are they the same thing? There is no explicit difference between happiness and joy. Both involve the emotions, both are pleasurable feelings, and both are mentioned in scripture passages that equate the two.

A dictionary definition of happiness is “a state of well-being; a pleasurable or satisfying experience.” A definition of the word rejoice, related to the word joy, is “to feel great delight; to be glad.” Depending on the translation, the Bible uses the words happy and happiness about 30 times, while joy and rejoice appear over 300 times.

It is common today to hear believers speak of a difference between joy and happiness. The teaching usually makes the following points: 1) Happiness is a feeling, but joy is not. 2) Happiness is fleeting, but joy is everlasting. 3) Happiness depends on circumstances or other people, but joy is a gift from God. 4) Happiness is worldly, but joy is divine. But there is no such distinction made in Scripture, and forcing a distinction between two words that are so obviously close in meaning is unnecessary. If a person is joyful, then he or she is happy. There’s no such thing as glum joy. We cannot drain joy of emotion and still call it “joy.” When God’s Spirit gives us joy, then we are happy people. Christians should be joyful; happiness should characterize our everyday lives.

The greatest difference between joy and happiness is quite substantial. There is happiness that comes from worldly pleasures that are fleeting but cannot bring the same feeling that joy in our experience with Jesus brings into our spirits. The happiness we find in the world is not necessarily wrong, it is just that we need to understand that it can pass just as quickly as it comes. Happiness is a reaction to something great, joy is the product of someone great. We should not forget the difference, and we should not fail to enjoy the happiness and joy of worldly pleasures. After all, God gave us the world to enjoy, we just have to be sure not to abuse what God has provided or make it more important than what God asks of us.

The true source of all joy is Jesus Christ. Once we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are able to constantly walk in the flow of joy and experience, fully, this wonderful gift. When we accepted Jesus, we were given something very special, the Holy Spirit. If, and this is a big if, if we accept what the Holy Spirit brings to the table, we can harvest the fruits of the Holy Spirit; “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23) The reason that I made a point regarding the word “if” is because we have the option to either accept the fruits or not as we choose. I personally cannot think of a reason why we should not all take full advantage of the fruits of the Spirit, but it is each person's choice.

Now how do I know that it is choice? 1st Thessalonians 5:16-18 says this; “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” These verses say something very important for us. First, they say that rejoicing always is the will of God and we know that obeying God's will is a choice; we can either obey or disobey. Second, rejoicing always means we can have joy in the good times and the difficult times or else God would not have said to rejoice always. There is a quote that I found that does not have

a name attributed to it that says; “Although joy does feel better with a happy smile, joy can share space with other emotions, sadness, fear, anger, and even unhappiness. Happiness cannot.”

To add emphasis to God's command to “rejoice always,” this being God's will for us, we must take into account one of the most encouraging verses in scripture; “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”(James 1:2) This verse tells us that joy and trials or hardship can co-exist in our relationship with God simply because we understand that God always, and I mean always, is with us **IF AND WHEN** we ask. Writer Mel Walker shares this thought beautifully when he says; “Biblical joy is choosing to respond to external circumstances with inner contentment and satisfaction, because we know that God will use these experiences to accomplish His work in and through our lives.” As Christians, it is important for us to remember that we may pursue happiness but we must choose joy. That biblical joy that is an attitude of the heart and spirit that will bring us lasting comfort and peace no matter how hard life becomes. The more that we love and revere Jesus, joy will become the shield that protects us when trials and tribulations come our way.

We think that being happy and joyful are the same thing, but there is a difference. We are happy when circumstances are pleasant and we are free from troubles. The big problem is that this happiness is fleeting and superficial. As soon as things turn sour, and they will, happiness evaporates like fog in the sun. We can only find true happiness when we embrace that inner joy and peace that comes from trusting God.

The words of Mary, mother of Jesus, that we find in the gospel of Luke says it quite well; “And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit **REJOICES** in God my Savior.”(Luke 1:46-47) Mary recognized that pure joy came from trusting God and having faith in what He was asking her to do. Do we have this kind of trust and faith in our God? Are we willing to do whatever God asks us to do in His name? If we can honestly say yes, then we will be able to rejoice in the way that God desires.

What does it mean to say rejoice? When we rejoice, we allow the joy that is within our spirit to shine out to the world and say that God is in charge of our lives. It is fine to have the joy of God and we need to express that joy by openly rejoicing in God's love for us. God has shown His love by sending His Son, our Savior, to live among us as a living human being. Emmanuel, God with us. Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of People/Prayer- Almighty God, you are our salvation. In you alone can we trust and not be afraid. Lord, you were angry because of our sin and rebellion and you have redeemed for yourself a people, a remnant, from every tribe, tongue and nation. You are to be praised! Lord we confess that you are our strength and our song. Without you we could do nothing. Without you our souls would be empty and in despair. Lord, grant your Spirit to come this morning and remind us of the joy of our salvation. Turn us in faith to thanksgiving and proclamation of the glorious works you have done. Help us sing for joy for you have promised us that you will be in our midst as we have gathered here this morning to hear from you. We ask these things in the name of your Son, our Savior and Sovereign King, Jesus Christ. Amen & Amen.

Closing Hymn- 135- Joy To The World

Benediction- Rejoice in the Lord always, show gentleness to all, do not be anxious, make your needs known to God by prayer, with thanksgiving; and the peace of God guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.