

GOD *with Us*



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God With Us Brings Joy

Luke 2:10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people."

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- The word *advent* means “coming” or “arrival,” and the season is marked by expectation, waiting, anticipation, and longing. Advent is not just an extension of Christmas—it is a season that links the past, present, and future.
- Advent offers us the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah, to celebrate His birth, and to be alert for His second coming.
- Advent looks back in celebration at the hope fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s coming, while at the same time looking forward in hopeful and eager anticipation to the coming of Christ’s kingdom when He returns for His people.
- During Advent we wait for both—it’s an active, assured, and hopeful waiting.
- And each week, we focus on a different attribute of God represented in the coming of Jesus: hope, love, joy, and peace.
- Because Jesus is Immanuel, “God with Us,” He is the embodiment of these traits, who has entered our world and who fills us with them all.

• Joy Defined – Nelsons Bible Dictionary

- JOY - A positive attitude or pleasant emotion; delight. Many kinds of joy are reported in the Bible. This makes it difficult to give a simple definition of joy. Even the wicked are said to experience joy in their triumphs over the righteous (1 Cor 13:6; Rev 11:10). Many levels of joy are also described, including gladness, contentment, and cheerfulness.
- But the joy which the people of God should have is holy and pure. This joy rises above circumstances and focuses on the very character of God. In the Psalms, for example, the psalmist rejoices over God's righteousness (71:14-16), salvation (21:1; 71:23), mercy (31:7), creation (148:5), word (119:14,162), and faithfulness (33:1-6). God's characteristics as well as His acts are the cause of rejoicing.
- The joy required of the righteous person (Ps 150; Phil 4:4) is produced by the Spirit of God (Gal 5:22). This kind of joy looks beyond the present to our future salvation (Rom 5:2; 8:18; 1 Peter 1:4,6) and to our sovereign God, who works out all things for our ultimate good, which is Christlikeness (Rom 8:28-30). This kind of joy is distinct from mere happiness. Joy like this is possible, even in the midst of sorrow (1 Cor 12:26; 2 Cor 6:10; 7:4). NBD

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- **Elizabeth: From Hope to Joy**
- Luke 1:11-15 While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. 12 Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. 13 But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. 14 You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord."
- To understand Elizabeth's joy, however, we have to understand a little bit about her pain.
- "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court" (Psalm 127:3-5)

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- To be childless, then, was a source of great frustration, sorrow, and shame. And Elizabeth would have known this despair for years.
- **And though she carried her emotional burden beneath the surface, she and Zechariah remained faithful to God.** Luke described them like this: “Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly” (Luke 1:6). This is how they planned to live out the rest of their old age, serving God and the people around them.
- **And then God came!!!!!!**
- Luke 1:23-25 When Zechariah's week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. 24 Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. 25 "How kind the Lord is!" she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."

- **Mary "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!"**
- Luke 1:26-38 During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. 28 The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you." 29 But Mary was very startled by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean. 30 The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has shown you his grace. 31 Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David, his ancestor. 33 He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end."
- 34 Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God. 36 Now Elizabeth, your relative, is also pregnant with a son though she is very old. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months. 37 God can do anything!" 38 **Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away. NCV**

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- Luke 1:39-45 Mary got up and went quickly to a town in the hills of Judea. 40 She came to Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the unborn baby inside her jumped, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 She cried out in a loud voice, "God has blessed you more than any other woman, and he has blessed the baby to which you will give birth. 43 Why has this good thing happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 **When I heard your voice, the baby inside me jumped with joy. 45 You are blessed because you believed that what the Lord said to you would really happen.**" NCV
- **Joy was flowing. And true to its nature, joy was contagious.**

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Luke 1:46-55 Then Mary said, "My soul praises the Lord; 47 my heart rejoices in God my Savior, 48 because he has shown his concern for his humble servant girl. From now on, all people will say that I am blessed,

49 because the Powerful One has done great things for me. His name is holy.

50 God will show his mercy forever and ever to those who worship and serve him.

51 He has done mighty deeds by his power. He has scattered the people who are proud and think great things about themselves. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones and raised up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with nothing. 54 He has helped his servant, the people of Israel, remembering to show them mercy. 55 as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his children forever." NCV

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- **Already Immanuel, God with Us, was unleashing joy on earth.**
- His joy began rippling outward. When Elizabeth gave birth to John three months later, the joy of her miracle spread through her village and family.
 - Luke 1:57-58 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. NIV
- **Seeing, Hearing, Believing and Going! – The Shepherds**

- Luke 2:8-19 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. **"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.** 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." 15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."
- 16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, NLT

- **Self-Centered, Hard Hearted and without Understanding – Herod**

- Matthew 2: 7-19

- **Embracing the Source of Joy**

- I Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In God's great mercy he has caused us to be born again into a living hope, because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. NCV
- I Peter 1:8-9 You have not seen Christ, but still you love him. You cannot see him now, but you believe in him. So you are filled with a joy that cannot be explained, a joy full of glory. 9 And you are receiving the goal of your faith — the salvation of your souls. NCV
- Pursuing happiness for the sake of happiness can be a shallow, self-centered pursuit. “It is the very pursuit of happiness that thwarts happiness,” wrote Viktor Frankl, the famous Jewish survivor of World War II Nazi concentration camps who wrote the book *Man’s Search for Meaning*.

- **Joy is rooted in gratitude, meaning, and hope fulfilled, especially when it is based in relationship with our Creator. Joy comes from God with Us—Jesus is the source of our joy.**
- Peter called it “an inexpressible and glorious joy” that is part of the inheritance we are receiving in Christ. With His life and the promise of eternal life beyond this world, we find the deep kind of joy that fills us no matter the pain that we still face on this earth.
- Jesus explained to His disciples about His coming death and resurrection, John 16:19-24
Jesus realized they wanted to ask him about it, so he said, "Are you asking yourselves what I meant? I said in a little while you won't see me, but a little while after that you will see me again. 20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. **You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy.** 21 It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. 22 **So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.** 23 At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. 24 **You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.** NLT

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- **Joy Defies Our Circumstances**

- Happiness comes and goes with positive events or experiences. Joy flows deep even in the face of challenge, hardship, or suffering. Joy drawn from Jesus, God with Us, sees the big picture beyond the immediate pain.
- James famously said it best right at the beginning of his eponymous book of the Bible: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2–4).
- Joy understands that there is more than meets the eye. That God is at work always, even in the tough stuff of life. And that eventually God will make everything right and healed and whole, including us. Because of that, we can experience joy in the here and now, no matter how bad the here and now looks and feels.

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- Sure, there's a process involved, and that's part of the point. As we continue to practice opening our hearts to God's Spirit, immersing ourselves in His Word, and aligning our thinking and perspectives to His ways, we experience His Spirit working within us, bringing us clarity, understanding, and strength to trust and see and act in the joy He provides.
- This was the message of the angel long ago announcing the arrival of Christ to the terrified shepherds outside of Bethlehem: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people" (Luke 2:9–10). Jesus, come to be God with Us, has brought us joy—no matter what we are facing.

Joy Is a Choice

- GOD HAD BROUGHT THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS TO THOSE WHO RECOGNIZED ITS NEED MOST; AND UNDERSTOOD ITS COST....

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- Such recognition of need is essential for every recipient of His Son, for all who would encounter Him and this same recognition is the spring of Christmas joy that heals the wounds of our sin.
- But Salvation is only understood through the despair of being lost. Too many of us have not experienced the presence of joy because we gloss over the presence of sin.
- The Presence of Joy... Comes as a Child
- The angel speaks of God's peace and his favor that would rest upon all of the world. I say "would" because this is a dependent statement not a conclusive one.
- God's peace and favor is not an imposition.
- **It is an invitation – not a summons.** It is a gift offered with the love of a creator, father, and savior.

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- And the nature of this gift is beyond compare. God himself as a baby in a box filled with cow food.
- The God who thought and created the world in the course of week days, has come to us. And in coming to the world he created for humankind he came as a baby – low born and without so much as a place to call home.
- A little hand reaches out of the manger & says, "Grab hold, I'll lead you to the throne. I'll lead you to the Father. I'll lead you to the one who is anxious to show you the way of life if you'll only follow me."
- The Savior invites all of this morning. He offers His life & His blood for your sins, and He waits to see if you will accept His great gift.
- John 3:16 "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life."
- It is only when you experience God's love while understanding your need for being saved that you get – really get – the presence of Joy.

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