



# Words of Advent

## Week 3 - Joy

**Isaiah 35:1-10**  
**Luke 1:46- 55**

Do you know what real joy is? We often associate it with feelings of pleasure or happiness, but what if we understood it to be more than that? Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat, found in Luke 1:46-55, is full of wonder and joy. It is quite remarkable considering that, to the society at the time, her situation would have been seen as disastrous, bringing shame to the family and warranting severe punishment (women were often stoned to death). You can imagine nothing more terrifying than being visited by an angel and then being told in an ultra-religious community that, as an unmarried woman, you are expecting a baby. Any young woman in her situation would be full of dread. She would have been labelled as a disgrace, unfaithful. So, the fact that Mary erupts into a song of praise is extraordinary.

Mary rejoices in her predicament. For to her, it is no predicament at all but rather something wonderful -she is to carry the saviour of the world. Astonishment and wonder are her responses when she is filled with the Holy Spirit. She is an example of unlimited trust, a willingness to obey with a remarkable confidence that God will take care of her. Because of her faith in God, she is not paralysed by fear; quite the contrary, she is amazed that she has been chosen from amongst all others. Here we have a teenage girl, far removed from royal connections, hailing from an insignificant town in the back of beyond. Her humble social status does not hinder God's perfect plan

It reminds us of what James 1:2-4 says, that even during trials, the joy of the Lord produces perseverance allowing us to live above and beyond our circumstances. Joy does not come from external sources. It is not reliant on

things or our circumstances, but is from the Holy Spirit—a gift, a free and perfect gift from God wrapped in thankfulness and praise. In Christ our joy is made complete and is our strength. (2 Corinthians 8:23).

27 November 2025

True joy then is not a warm, fuzzy feeling that rises and falls with life's circumstances; it is the constant living presence of Jesus Christ, who makes his home in our hearts. When we understand joy as the person of Jesus, we mean that joy is not purely subjective but a person who meets us in our fragility, enters our loneliness, and refuses to leave us to ourselves. To say that Jesus is our joy is to say that our deepest longing for wholeness is answered—not by a mood that comes and goes but by a faithful companion who joins us, in the mess, and invites us into life with God.

Amid pain, Jesus endured the joy of the cross for our sake. (Hebrews 12:2). So, joy is both a calling and a gift. It isn't just derived from our immediate circumstances but stems from knowing that, despite what is happening around us, all will be well. It does not mean we must assume a kind of 'fake' happiness but look to the coming of the Messiah and the extension of Christ's kingdom that ushers in victory over fear, death, and all manner of wrong.

Because joy is not just a feeling but of God, it is also an act of will. A daily, personal decision to focus on Christ rather than fear, to trust his presence when feelings fade, and life is hard. When there's an absence of it, it doesn't mean that we must feel condemned but rather turn our gaze to the one who brings joy.

The willingness to turn our hearts toward God with gratitude leads to service; in doing so we choose patience over impatience, compassion over bitterness, and silence over the maddening noise of self-opinion that distracts us from listening. In this way, joy becomes a discipline of love—less about chasing our feelings and more about remaining faithful to the One whose very presence transforms our inner landscape from turmoil to peace.

May you find joy this week.

### Activity

- Where might you find the joy of the Lord this week?
- In what circumstances do you need to experience God's peace and pray for deep joy?
- Commit to doing an act that brings joy this week. Praise God, smile at a stranger, do something for someone else, develop a posture of gratitude, and write the things that come to mind in a journal giving thanks to God.

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, who are my joy and my companion, make your home in my heart. When feelings waver, and circumstances press in, remind me that joy is not merely an emotion but your living presence with me. Please give me the courage to choose you each morning, to turn my will toward gratitude, patience, faithfulness, and joy. Teach me to recognise your presence with me in my difficulties, to welcome you in my weakness, and to serve others from the joy only you give. When bitterness or fear arises, steady my will to rest in you; when weariness tempts me to withdraw, call me to look outward. Keep me faithful to the simple discipline of choosing you again and again, that my life may witness to the power of joy made flesh. In your name, Amen.



Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22: 1-2 (NRSV)