



Week 3 | Advent Joy

By Sheila Sekela

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” (Be honest, you sang it, didn’t you?) This year at South Elkhorn our Advent theme is Watch for the Light, and this is the Joy week of the traditional Advent Season.

What fun! Laughing, excited children waiting for Santa and presents, holiday parties and open houses, family coming in from out of town to celebrate together. Festive decorations, special religious services... all around us we see what a happy and joyous time of year Christmas can be.

Depending on the stage of life you are in, though, Christmastime “joy” can seem elusive. As I am writing this, several families in our congregation have recently been touched by death and their Christmas season’s joy will be liberally mixed with sorrow. The holidays can be a lonely time for many.

But I don’t think joy has to be completely elusive, not when we are watching for the light of Christ. Just as Elizabeth’s baby John leapt for joy in her womb at the sound of Mary’s voice when she was pregnant with Jesus, our hearts, too, can leap at the thought of His advent. When we hear Christmas carols or Handel’s Messiah or the Christmas story read to us, we can remember that “for the joy set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2) Jesus came into this world and died on a cross for us.

Once when I was reading Hebrews 12:2, I wondered to myself “What was the joy set before Him?” It wasn’t an audible voice, but I clearly heard the Lord tell me, “YOU, Sheila! You were the joy set before Me.” You see, Jesus really does love me. And He really does love you, you also were the joy set before Him. He emptied Himself of deity, lived a poor man’s life, and died a criminal’s death because the joy of having us was worth it to Him.

I truly can’t comprehend why, but isn’t it wonderful to know we give Christ joy? For me, knowing this makes that little baby-in-a-manger scene all the sweeter. He gives me joy and I give Him joy and the angels sing for joy! Perhaps this week we can slow down a bit and marvel at the “good tidings of great joy that shall be for all the people.” (Luke 2:10) Listen for His sweet voice in the notes of choirs and orchestras, and look for His smile in the little gifts of beauty He brings your way. Remembering how much He loves us can give us a deep and abiding joy, and I pray that for you today.

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