

Advent Devotional



Embracing the Gift of Joy

*Written by Rev. Tony Oltmann
Luke 1:46-55*

Children of God, when I chose the Advent theme of “joy” to be the one I’d write about, I figured it’d be easy. Write a few platitudes. Add some scripture. Assignment done. Yet, “joy” seems elusive to some. To others, it seems to be a part of every breath they take.

Jane, a member of a congregation I served, is one such person. Joy was interwoven with her very being and she never hesitated to share her joy with others. It was pure and genuine. It was the kind of joy that seemed to be impenetrable and that celebrated when others had success because, for her, it was God at work. For Jane, her joy was deeply rooted in God’s grace.

Jane’s joy always reminded me of the joy that Mary, the mother of Jesus, expresses in her Magnificat in the Gospel of Luke 1:46-55. The joy Mary expresses is a joy that comes from a keen awareness of God’s grace at work. Mary knew who she was. She knew the mistakes she made. Knew her own brokenness. She knew all her faults and failures. Yet, she also knew God was extending her grace. A grace that recognized all of who Mary was and still choose to bless Mary. It was out of that awareness and grace that Mary’s joy flowed.

In the Magnificat, Mary’s heart overflows with joy as she proclaims her gratitude to God for the extraordinary role she has been entrusted with and realizing that was a gift of grace. Her words echo through the ages, reminding us of the grace of God and how that grace can be a source of joy. Her words echo through the ages, reminding us of the boundless hope we have in Christ and the joy it brings to our lives. Mary’s joy is a profound and abiding one, rooted in her unwavering faith in God and the grace God extends.

The source of our joy can be the grace God gave to the world through the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. This moment of grace brought immeasurable joy to the world, and it continues to bless us today. The words of the prophet Isaiah resonate: “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12). This anticipation reminds us of the joy that Mary experienced, a joy that is a foretaste of the eternal joy we have in Christ.

Let us hold on to joy, rooted in the grace of God. Let’s share it with those around us and let it illuminate our actions. Through Mary’s example in the Magnificat, we see how joy can be a transformative force, bringing light to the darkest corners of our lives and communities.

