

ADVENT THREE

Nazareth: A Place of Simplicity (Joy)



We move north to the tiny village of Nazareth. Although not so tiny anymore, in those days, Nazareth was a place where “everyone knows your name” since it could only support a limited amount of people from one small well of water. Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel with news that she would bear a son. Mary’s joy was not limited by the improbability that such a thing could happen in Nazareth. It is this simple tight-knit community of limited resources where survival required interdependence that Jesus would be raised and grow into the teacher he became. This week we wonder: what joy can we glean from the simplest of moments, the simplest of gifts, allowing ourselves to savor this season, pregnant with possibilities?

Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the gentiles; in him the gentiles shall hope.” May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

— Romans 15: 12-13 NRSVUE

Here are some simple things in life that bring me deep joy:

Holy and Living God, we pray for the refocusing
of our lives on what really matters.

Too often, we allow the complexity of modern life to take over,
and we fail to sense your presence in our everyday lives.

Call us to a simplified joy.

Call us to simply pause in the midst of our scheduled mania
and breathe in the possibility that you are asking for our attention.

We pray this in the name of your Son,
Jesus, the Christ, the Joy of Our Lives. **Amen.**

[Click this link](https://youtu.be/HqjQYYob2zk) or scan the QR code below
to go to a short video of the scripture
and visualization of our journey.
(<https://youtu.be/HqjQYYob2zk>)



Monday: Responding with Joy

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Read Luke 1: 26-38. The scripture passage does not say that Mary was immediately full of gladness at the angel's news of a surprise pregnancy... and yet, we often tell this story during the "joy" week and celebrate Mary's speedy acceptance of God's calling. What other emotions do you imagine Mary might have felt during her own journey to acceptance?

Tuesday: Time to Simplify?

What practices do you turn to for simplifying routines or cutting down on clutter when your life begins to feel too busy? How can you give yourself space and time to slow down during this Advent and Christmas season?

Wednesday: Let's Walk Together a While

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The Romans specified a "mile" as a unit of measurement equating to 1000 paces, calculating 5 feet as the average span for most men in military units. We use the phrase "walking a mile in someone else's shoes" as a metaphor for showing empathy for others. When is the last time you consciously channeled empathy for someone in your life? How does empathy make us better traveling companions on the shared road of life?

Thursday: Family Trees

Read Romans 15: 12-13. What kinds of legacies – positive or negative – are part of your family tree? Which have you sought to grow away from or to grow into? To what extent do you believe that our family histories influence our individual experiences of life?

Friday: Joy vs. Apathy

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We often consider joy as the opposite of despair, or the antithesis to feeling “blue.” What if joy is always present like an elemental force? Write about an ordinary moment from your day today and notice as many opportunities for gratitude as you can. How much joy can you squeeze from the everyday stuff of life so that you can truly be present and appreciate it?

Saturday: Looking to Bethlehem

This week, we have explored how joy is an active practice we can cultivate, not just a happy emotion we get to feel when everything is going great. Love is the same way. In what ways do you cultivate the practice of loving others?
