

**Advent - Week 3: Joy**  
**December 14 & 18, 2011**  
**Isaiah 61:1-2; John 1:1-14; 1 John 2:24-25**

Intro:

- Christmas Lights...people who put them up early and take them down late...
- Past few weeks, we've had a question on the connection card, "What's your favorite Christmas movie?"
- Elf, Christmas Vacation, Christmas Story, Miracle on 34th Street, It's a Wonderful Life

The Grinch Who Stole Christmas...

You know the story, comes and steals all the trees and decor, all the presents and food...after doing so, he listens to the town and instead of hearing despair and crying he hear's singing....

*So explains the narrator: "He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming. It came. Somehow or other it came just the same. And the Grinch with his Grinch feet ice cold in the snow stood puzzling and puzzling how could it be so."*

*Finally, the Grinch speaks: "It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes, or bags. Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more."*

- Don't know if you've ever been called a "Grinch" or perhaps a "Scrooge". We will say things like, "You need more "Christmas Spirit"! What does that mean?"
- The real issue isn't stinginess, greed or a bad case of the grouchies...the real issue is Joy or the lack of Joy in our lives...Jesus brought Joy to the World when he was born in Bethlehem.

**- READ Luke 2:8-14 & 25-35**

- Jesus came to bring GREAT joy to those who believe!

**QUESTION: Why do so many of us struggle for our lives to be filled with joy, even though we have placed our trust in him and accepted him as Lord and Savior?**

**Joy is the light of Christ dispelling the darkness in our own lives!**

- I have many friends who suffer from depression, their constant struggle is to drag their lives and spirit out of darkness and into light...they will sometimes refer to having moments of time...hours, days, weeks where everything is simply dark.
- Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Joy is light dispelling the darkness!

- Last week we talked about Isaiah 40, that the promise of the Messiah was to bring hope to the people! Israel was to be exiled.

- During that time of exile and then even after Babylon was defeated the Israelites were allowed to return home...these were dark times.

**READ Isaiah 59:9-15**

**READ Isaiah 60:1**

**Isaiah 9:1-2, “Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.”**

**John 1:1-14**

**1) In the beginning the Word already existed.**

**The Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.**

**2) He existed in the beginning with God.**

**3) God created everything through him,  
and nothing was created except through him.**

- Jesus existed in the very beginning of time...he was not created he was and is co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit

- While Jesus came into this world as a baby, born of the Mary who was a virgin and of the Holy Spirit...into a Jewish family (Jesus was Jewish?)...he came in that way so that you and I could be saved.

- One of my favorite Christmas stories was that of the old man who lived on the mountain by himself. Each year, the pastor from the town below would invite him to Christmas services...he contended that why would God want to become like one of us?

- All things were created through him

**4) The Word gave life to everything that was created,  
and his life brought light to everyone.**

**5) The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never extinguish it.**

- Paintings of Christ in the manger with the light-globe

- This is John's nativity!

- Joy is salvation! Light and life is given to us by Christ!

**- READ 1 John 1:1-4**

- Think of how powerful the light of Jesus Christ is...the darkness can never extinguish it! Whatever you are facing...whatever dark moments are in your life...it cannot overcome the light of Christ.

**6) God sent a man, John the Baptist, 7) to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. 8) John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. 9) The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.**

- John stresses the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus...there were times in the early church when people knew of John the Baptist but not about Jesus

- John is not the source of the light, but can only reflect the light of Christ

- All I can do for someone is point them to Jesus...he is the source of peace and hope and joy. He is the light. He is the life. He is our salvation.

- We have to be careful not to gain a "Messiah complex" where we think it is "us" that makes a difference in the lives of others...it is Jesus in us...it is JESUS that makes the difference in the lives of others and we should constantly in our efforts to live lives for him...point to him as the joy of our salvation!

**10) He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.**

**11) He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12) But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13) They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.**

- The world was blinded to who Jesus was...the world is still blind to this.

- his own people isn't like "I'm one of you guys...you should accept me." it refers to that they are his. God chosen people and the nation of Israel are Jesus' chosen people and nation. He doesn't belong to them, they belong to HIM!

**14) So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unending love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.**

- Jesus came, gave up the privileges of the divine, but did not set aside his divinity. He was fully human and fully divine...not 50/50!

- We have seen his glory...and it simply doesn't get any better than that!

But for some...this dark world has stolen the joy and the radiance of Jesus Christ, the joy and light that He is...becomes dim...we are distracted, burned out and we lost our joy! We will try all kinds of ways to get it back...even this time of year people replace true joy in Christ...with "Christmas Spirit", the gifts, the decor, the food, the parties and celebrations...I love all these things...but there is something more to Christmas than all that stuff! The joy of this season...Christ!

**"I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for joy." - C.S. Lewis**

I had the habit of losing one shoe growing up. Seriously...one shoe...could have been my tennis shoes, my church shoes, slippers...whatever. I could find one but not the

other. Whenever you tell a parent, "I lost \_\_\_\_\_." Their response is always, "Where did you lose it?"

"I've lost my joy!" Ever hear that statement...or closer still...ever say it?

The question that MUST follow this statement is simple, "Where did you lose it?"

Where do you lose Joy?

#### 5 Places we Lose our Joy:

1) Sorrows

2) Complaints

3) Comparisons

4) Grudges

5) Fear

1 John 2:24-25, ***"So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us."***

Joy abides with God  
and it comes down from God  
and embraces spirit, soul, and body;  
and where this joy has seized a person,  
there it spreads,  
there it carries one away,  
there it bursts closed doors.  
A sort of joy exists  
that knows nothing at all  
of the heart's pain, anguish, and dread;  
it does not last,  
it can only numb a person for the moment.  
The joy of God the poverty of the manger  
and the agony of the cross;  
that is why it is invincible,  
irrefutable.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer.