

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, Montana

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3rd Sunday in Advent - December 13, 2020 ... Theme: JOY

Message

Wondrous Joy

Matthias Krier

Somewhere in my files, my wife and I collaborated on a cartoon years and years ago. We actually worked on a number of cartoons based on a family whose last name was "Christian". I thought up the captions and she illustrated the cartoons. Someday, I hope to these back hidden in a file somewhere, but let me describe it to you. In the first scene is a religious man praying on his knees in his bedroom. He looks rather irritated and looks up to God and says rather loudly, "Where is the joy? Where is the joy".

In the next scene, his wife opens the door a bit more and says with a smirk on her face, "Underneath the kitchen sink, honey!"

In the passage from Isaiah, the Mid-Week Reflections group came up with a long list of things that are JOY-FILLED or could possibly create JOY. One person had as his take-away from Isaiah was that "hope was greater than fear." That caused me to pause for a moment. Another said, his take-away was that the scripture provides a Way to follow in this world. Remember that the early Christians were not called Christians. **What were they called?** They were called followers of the Way. Isaiah was sharing his understanding of the Way several millennia ago:

Isaiah 61:1

The SPIRIT of the Lord GOD is upon ME

Because the LORD has anointed Me.

The Sovereign Lord GOD has sent Me:-

To bring good news to the afflicted

To bind up the broken-hearted,

To proclaim liberty to captives

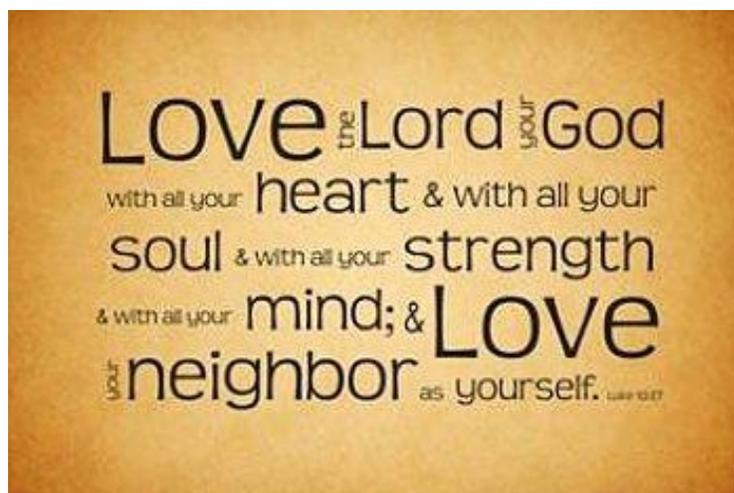
And freedom to prisoners..

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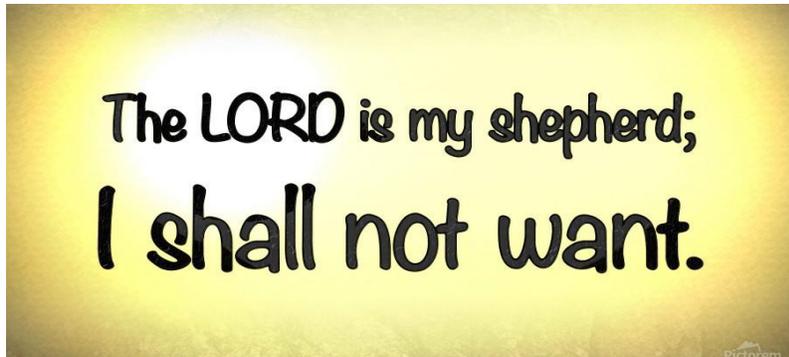
Being a follower of the Way can bring us great joy. In our words for meditation today is this verse and more that can bring us joy. Listen carefully for the ingredients of true joy:

⁸*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become* my disciples.* ⁹*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.* ¹⁰*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in my Father's love.* ¹¹*I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.* John 15:8-11

There are tons of passages that can help us find true joy and this is one of them. First, bear much fruit by becoming disciples of Jesus. As we strive to become disciples of Jesus, we are saying that we will become instruments of hope, peace and joy. I never tire of these themes for Advent. **Why not?** Because I know there is always more room for hope in my life. I know there is always more room for a deeper and deeper peace to permeate my being. I know there is always room for a joy that knows no bounds! When we strive to be disciples of Jesus and abide in Yeshua's love, we will have a desire to keep the commandments especially those summarized by Jesus here in the gospel of Luke:



It seems so simple, so very simple and in some ways it is. However, while it may be simple, it isn't easy. We are so distracted by a multitude of things that it is hard to find true joy. We want more of this and we want more of that. What does Psalm 23 say about this:



In other words, this means, I have everything I need.

I believe one of the paths to true joy is being content with what one has. When we are content with what we have, we are eternally grateful for what is. Some of the most joyful people I know are those who live simply, so others may simply live.



As we strive to know true JOY as disciples of Christ, may we learn to bring good news to the poor and afflicted.

As we strive to know true JOY as disciples of Christ, may we learn to be content with what we have.

As we strive to know true JOY as disciples of Christ, may we learn to live simply so others may simply live.

Our hymn of preparation today for celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion is an old Shaker Song entitled "Simple Gifts". Feel free to sing along and feel the spirit of simplicity that could no doubt bring more JOY into your life.

Hymn of Preparation

Simple Gifts Video - Yo Yo Ma & Alison Krauss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-drWy6hAzU>

'Tis the gift to be simple 'tis a gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be
And when we find ourselves in the place just right
Twill be in the valley of love and delight

When true simplicity is gained
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed
To turn, turn will be our delight
Till by turning, turning we come round right

There is one thing I believe is needed in order to know true joy...
And that is contentment. Amen.

Holy Communion

*United Methodists practice "open communion"
where everyone is welcome to receive. Everyone!*