

Sun, Dec 15 • Practicing Together



On this third Sunday of Advent, gather your people around the Advent wreath, and ...

LIGHT

Light two purple candles and the pink candle on the Advent wreath. You will relight the past two week's candles representing hope and peace, as well as the pink candle which represents joy.

PRAY

God of joy, as we light this candle, we celebrate the good news we have received because of Jesus' birth. Fill our hearts with the joy that comes from knowing your love. Open our hearts to you this Advent season, so when Christ arrives, we are ready to receive him. Amen.

DISCUSS

- What kind of things bring you joy?
- How do you distinguish happiness from joy?

READ LUKE 2:8-18

Do you remember a time when you had to wait for something? Do you recall that thrill of excitement when it finally happened?

Picture the shepherds on the dark, lonely hills outside of Bethlehem—a group of men on the margins of society—suddenly awakened by the brilliant presence of an angel with a special message for them. While they were still dumbfounded, a multitude of angels appeared praising God! Can you even imagine that kind of scene? These men would have never expected to be the first to hear such amazing news, let alone being told in such a magnificent way.

Think about the Magi who traveled a great distance following a star. They had no assurance they would find anything at the end of their journey or if it would all be in vain. They must have felt a thrill of excitement, an uncontrollable joy, when their hope became reality.

Have you ever wondered what it will be like to finally see Jesus? Can you even begin to fathom the joy that will fill your heart?

Practicing
Together

Reading

Digging

Listening

Seeing

Doing



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WORSHIP

Sing along to this familiar Christmas carol. Let the music fill you with joy as you celebrate the birth of Jesus.

JOY TO THE WORLD

youtube.com/watch?v=TX6ThHbts5Y

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
and wonders, wonders, of His love.

READ - ISAIAH 55:12

These words are part of Isaiah's prophetic invitation to enter the kingdom of heaven. One day, everything broken by the fall, all of creation will feel with God's children the overwhelming joy that flows into spontaneous praise.

WORSHIP

Listen to or read the words of this song. The music and lyrics create a sense of joy and anticipation.

HOW GREAT OUR JOY

youtube.com/watch?v=twj7dRA_ONM

While by the sheep we watched at night,
Glad tidings brought an angel bright.

Refrain:

How great our joy! Great our joy!
Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!
Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!
Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

There shall be born, so He did say,
in Bethlehem a Child today.

Refrain

Joy, joy, joy!
Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

There shall the Child lie in a stall,
this Child who shall redeem us all.

Refrain

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PRAY

God of joy, keep us from seeking happiness in things that do not last. Teach us instead to seek your Son, knowing that he is the source of lasting joy. He came into this world with nothing, yet gave us everything. As we rejoice in the good news of salvation, show us how we can share that joy with others during this season of Advent. Amen.

ACTIVITY FOR THE WEEK

MAKE A GRATITUDE JAR

Decorate a mason jar and leave it on your counter, along with a pen and a stack of small papers. Throughout the remainder of Advent, write your blessings—or things you are thankful for—on the slips of paper then place them in the jar. Try to fill the jar with all of your blessings. Include people you are grateful for and why you're thankful for each person. Read the blessings from the jar on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

If you have kids, you could do a gratitude paper chain instead of a jar. Keep it in a prominent place where it will be seen every day. Make it a game to see how long you can get the chain before Christmas.

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Before you close today, ask everyone in your group if there is anyone they could invite to the Candlelight services. Make a list of these people and pray that God will open the door for these invitations to be received.