



Joy to the World

Three days each week our two granddaughters burst into our house at 6 AM. While Kathy and I might still be groggy, the kids' enthusiasm takes us out of our slumber. At 18 months, the oldest is beginning to say a few words. As she first sees us she offers a gleeful "hi." She squeals with joy and runs up to us to give us a hug. Their joy is genuine and from the heart. It instantly makes our day special.

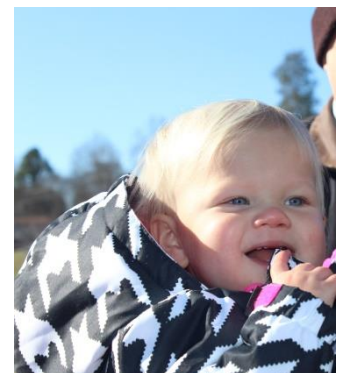


We could learn from their example. They aren't worried about tomorrow, whether or not they will have a job in the New Year or where the next meal is coming from. They aren't bogged down by life's issues. They just love by being "in the moment," sharing a hug with grandma and grandpa, and anticipating what is to come. They know grandma is ready to fix breakfast and grandpa will play with them or take them on a walk. Their real-time joy is simple and authentic.

"Joy is the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying." Jesus' birth is all of that, and more.

The third Advent candle in many churches represents joy as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ. As we move closer to Christmas Day we know what is to come. Jesus brings us joy that day, overshadowing any life issues we face. On Christmas Eve one of the readings you will likely hear is: *"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'" (Luke 2:10).* We have nothing to fear.

But the joy is not just for a day. Jesus allows us the happiness and delight for all time. Young grandchildren don't worry about sin. At this stage children live a simple life of pure love, free from worry. We can too, because Jesus frees us from sin. When we are right with God there is no need to worry. We can live a life of joy.



Christmas Eve you are likely to sing the classic hymn "Joy to the World." The words focus on the pure joy that Jesus gives us. Think of this hymn in your mind: "Joy to the world. The Lord is come. Let earth receive her king." That tells us who He is. Then the hymn tells us what He does: "Joy to the world, the Savior reigns;" "No more let sins and sorrows grow;" "He rules the world with truth and grace." And the hymn concludes by focusing in on the magic of His love: "And wonders of His love." The words of the hymn summarize it well. We can have joy because the Lord has come. He is the Savior who takes away our sin and sorrows. He rules with truth and grace, and his love is beyond all understanding. Just like the mutual love we have with our grandchildren we have the same with Jesus. With Christ, there is reason to celebrate with great joy. It all starts at Christmas.

Scripture: *You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Psalm 16:11).*

Question: How does Jesus bring joy to your life Christmas day and every day?

Prayer: This advent season let us remember that Jesus is coming into the world to bring joy to our lives, because He will take away our sins and allow us to live a life of pure love. Amen.