



Advent Joy-A-Tude

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior. (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

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)

A woman was Christmas shopping with her two children. After many hours of looking at rows of toys and everything else imaginable, her children wanted it all because it would make them happy. Finally she made it to the elevator with her two kids.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season time of year:

- Giving the “perfect” gift, no matter the cost, so every person will be happy
- Overwhelming pressure to go to every event
- Responding to everyone who sent a card
- Baking calorie-laden cookies
- Entertaining with a smile and projecting that all is calm
- Creating the “Perfect” decorated house and tree
- Staying within the shrinking budget and not forgetting anyone on the list

The elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car. She pushed her way in, dragging her two kids and bags of stuff!

When the doors closed she couldn’t take it anymore and shouted, “Whoever started this whole Christmas thing and promised happiness, should be found, strung up, and killed!” Silence hovered. Then from the back of the elevator a quiet, calm voice responded, “Don’t worry lady. We’ve already crucified Him.”

Unfortunately, people get so caught up in materialism to find happiness, that the one and only “perfect” Gift, Jesus Christ, the Lord Our Righteousness, is squeezed into the end of a busy schedule, if at all.

Joy-robber Satan entices us to root our happiness in ever-changing external circumstances. He tries to keep us focused on the immediate so that we blind ourselves to the only permanent Source of real JOY, Jesus Christ the “*King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land*” (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Rejoice in the Good News of great JOY! When God completed His plan of salvation for us, He did not merely give us righteousness, He sent His Son to be our Savior. Promises kept! He went to the cross to endure death so that He might share life with us. Because of Christ’s resurrection

we live our lives with the knowledge that through faith in Him nothing can ever separate us from the ultimate JOY, eternal life! Let us focus on God's promises and delivery as the center of our Christmas activities, and set aside the commercialization with a new Joy-A-Tude. This Advent season, and every day, implement a new Joy-A-Tude!

This new Joy-A-Tude grows from being attached to the Vine where we are nourished and strengthened to meet the demands of the holiday season and daily life. We can be contagious with this new Joy-A-Tude because we focus on the fact that lasting happiness springs only from circumstances where the Spirit of God dwells. His real JOY is there sustaining us in spite of circumstances. ... *you will fill me with joy in your presence (Psalm 16:11a).*

Be assured that today you will never run out of the gift of JOY, a fruit of the Spirit – nor will you need to wait for it for tomorrow. God is always in the moment, be that moment hard or easy, painful or happy. Therefore, as you walk with this new Joy-A-Tude, ask the Spirit to guide you as you share the Good News of the Lord Our Righteousness.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, You are an awesome God! Thank you for sending Your Son, our Righteous Branch, so that we can anticipate the ultimate JOY of living with You in Heaven! Keep us mindful that Your Son is the only everlasting source of JOY that is ever present to sustain us in all circumstances! We ask for guidance so that we may, with all boldness and confidence, never be afraid to joyfully tell everyone how much You love them! This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Be contagious, spread Advent JOY:

Encourage people to make and use computer generated JOY labels to stick on envelopes, gifts, and plates of cookies.

Song: "Behold a Branch is Growing" *LSB 359, LW 67*

Scripture is from the NIV.

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