

Worship at Home: Third Sunday of Advent

 ministrymatters.com/all/entry/10614/worship-at-home-third-sunday-of-advent

Third Sunday of Advent: Joy

GATHERING MUSIC

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

The Piano Guys (cello and piano)

<https://youtu.be/iO7ySn-Swwc>

CENTERING WORDS

“In the beginning was a song—and the song was God’s joy, and God was joy.”

~ Lo The Poet

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF JOY *(with adults)*

(If you are worshipping alone or with a group of adults, relight the Advent candles of Peace and Hope, then light a third purple candle and follow these instructions.)

As you gaze upon the flickering candles, reflect on the song of joy that God is singing in and through your life — even if the words and melody seem too faint to hear. Centering your attention on your breath, allow this song of joy to set your heart singing. Breathe deeply, and with each breath you take, listen for the harmonies your soul longs to add to the song. Hold each breath for a moment, feeling God’s joy in every beat of your heart. As you exhale, focus on releasing the things that steal your joy, the things that make you doubt the Singer and the song singing within and through you. Continue to breathe in and out until you cannot keep from singing.

—OR—

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF JOY *(with children)*

(If you are worshipping with children, help the third youngest child light the Advent candle of Peace and Hope before lighting a third candle that is either pink or purple. Explain that you will light an additional candle each week until the white candle is lit to celebrate Christ’s birth on Christmas Eve. If you use a pink candle, ask, “Why pink?” and encourage the children to come up with their own answers. Traditions vary, so there is no “right” answer, but rose is the liturgical color of joy, whereas purple is the liturgical color of royalty, focusing on the coming King. Gaze on the candles quietly before reading the response below; or use the response to begin a conversation on how the children see the candles. With older children, try reflecting the questions back to them, inviting them to

provide their own answers.)

Child: Why do we light Advent candles?

Adult: Advent candles remind us of the light of God coming into the world at Christmas.

Child: How many candles do we light today?

Adult: We light three candles because this is the third week of Advent.

Child: Why do we relight the first two candles?

Adult: We relight the Advent candles of Peace and Hope because this is a season of peace and hope.

Child: Why do we light the third candle?

Adult: This is the Advent candle of Joy. We light it because Mary sang for joy when she heard she would give birth to Jesus, who is the joy of the world.

Child: So that's why we light the Advent candles.

Adult: That's why we light the Advent candles.

POETIC REFLECTION

"For Unto Us – JOY" Lo The Poet

https://youtu.be/M_lqgLFUkgY

OPENING PRAYER

Your song is joy, Singer of Creation, for you are Joy—
joy that fills the empty with good things;
joy that sings light into the darkness;
joy that echoes with angelic song;
joy that births hope in the midst of despair.
Open my lips to sing your praise
and receive your melody in my life.
I am ready for your coming,
the coming of Joy. Amen.

SCRIPTURE OF PRAISE (*Philippians 4:4-5*)

Rejoice in the Lord always.
Again I say, Rejoice!
Make your gentleness known to all.
The Lord is near.

SONG “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Megan Smith’s channel (choir with lyrics)
https://youtu.be/7xtpJ4Q_Q-4

SCRIPTURE READING (Luke 1:46b-55, NIV adapted)

(This scripture may be read responsively.)

Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
who has been mindful of me,
a humble servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is God’s name.
God’s mercy extends to those who fear the Lord,
from generation to generation.
God’s arm is strong, performing mighty deeds,
and scattering the proud in their inmost thoughts.
The mighty one has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
The Lord has filled the hungry
but has sent the rich away empty.
God has helped Israel, the Lord’s servant,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
fulfilling the promises to our ancestors.”

MEDITATION

Mary’s Magnificat, or song of praise, mirrors Hannah’s song of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. But this is more than beautiful poetry; this conveys the joyful heart of a young girl who has every reason to be anything but joyful. Convincing your friends and family, particularly your fiancé, that you carry a child conceived by the Holy Spirit is a tough sell. Yet Mary’s

heart is filled with joy, knowing who God is bringing into the world through her. Ninety percent of the spiritual life is about letting go . . . of control, the need to be right, the need to appear spotless and blameless in the eyes of other. As the old saying goes: Let go and let God. Mary is the perfect vessel to carry the Son of God precisely because she is humble, and because she is willing to say with Jesus in the garden: “Not my will but thy will be done.” In aligning with, and finding joy in, God’s purposes, Mary became the unshakable example of faith that has been venerated by millions of Christians through the ages. Today is a day to realize that joy does not come from getting what we want, but from receiving what God is doing through us — even when it seems like this is anything but a blessing.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

If your health allows, go outside without a coat for a minute or two. When the winter begins to slowly rob you of warmth, step back inside and be joyful that you have a place to live and escape the elements. Pay attention to your body, as goosebumps give way to a luxurious sensation of comfort and security. Look at the place you call home, however humble, and give thanks for your blessings. Then offer a silent prayer for those who are not housed, those who spend their days and nights seeking the shelter you often take for granted.

–OR–

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Reflect on Lo the Poet’s “For Unto Us – JOY”

- How do you sense God’s joy in Jesus’ birth stories and in Jesus’ entry into the world?
- Where have you seen signs of God’s joy in recent weeks or in this past year?
- When have you felt that sorrow might swallow the story whole?
- Where have you heard joy wrapped in song during Advent?
- Where or how are you discovering truth wrapped in mystery as you seek to embrace Christ’s presence during this holiday season?

SONG “Joy to the World”

Megan Smith’s channel (*choir with lyrics*)

<https://youtu.be/kyciMYZq2-Y>

Celtic Woman (vocals)

<https://youtu.be/VDmIddF7DfQ>

BENEDICTION

Joy has come,
for the Lord has come.
Be open to its splendor.
Be prepared to sing it in your heart.
Be ready to receive the Singer of Creation,
the coming of Joy.

SENDING ACTIVITIES

(Choose an activity or come up with your own way to share God's joy in the week ahead.)

- If you have the ability or technology to perform or play music outdoors, surprise your neighbors by inviting them to come and listen to a short holiday concert. Sing or play joy-filled Christmas carols from your driveway or deck, reminding people to sing along only if it is safe to do so. Otherwise, encourage people to hum quietly as you all enjoy the gift of joy that comes through music.
- Deliver a poinsettia, potted plant, or a simple holiday gift anonymously to a neighbor's front porch or a favorite church or charity's front office. Include a card that says, "Joy to the world and joy to you!" or "Thank you for bringing joy to the world!" Alternately, send emails or cards with a message of joy.
- Make Christmas cookies with frosting and sprinkles. As you decorate each cookie, think of one thing that brings you joy, then pray for this source of joy. If you do this activity with children or other family members, take turns talking about the things that bring you joy as you decorate.

This is an excerpt from Worship at Home Advent & Christmas 2020. Copyright © 2020 Mary J. Scifres and B.J. Beu.