

JOY

If you have an Advent wreath, go ahead and light your two purple candles and the pink one. Otherwise, find any candle and light it before reading this devotion.

This third week of Advent urges us to remember joy.

Christmas may be the hap-happiest season of all for you. You may be bursting with carols mid-October, throwing the tree up immediately after the jack-o-lantern sinks in, and happily wearing your 3D Christmas sweaters with zero shame in your holiday game.

Christmas may be the opposite for you. It may bring up painful memories, overwhelm you with expectations, or discourage you with the seemingly endless busyness and spending. You may spend the season just wishing for life to go back to normal.

Or, most likely, you land somewhere in between.

Thankfully, joy has very little to do with our present circumstances. God actually has no rules about how you're supposed to feel while singing "joy to the world." You may be feeling happy; you may be feeling sad - but in the midst of either, you can experience joy.

Joy is a posture of the heart. It is knowing that, no matter our circumstances, we are wildly loved by our Father. We are redeemed. We are seen. And when He came down to earth - *everything changed*.

Sometimes, remembering those things will simply allow you to continue putting one foot in front of the other... and that's okay. *Feeling* joyful isn't a necessary step to acknowledging the truth that you are known, loved, and redeemed.

But often times, remembering those things *will* allow deep-seeded joy to bubble up - bubble up into happiness and laughter and delight. You are beloved!

This week, remember that joy - the joy of your salvation. Remember whose you are. Remember your identity as a beloved one of God's kids. And when joy bubbles up - spread that stuff around! It's contagious.

READ:

Luke 2:1-20

Psalm 51:7-12

Romans 15:13

DISCUSS/REFLECT:

What word or phrase in these verses stands out to me the most?

How can you find joy when plans change or things don't work out the way you wish? (Mary & Joseph's plans certainly didn't pan out as planned.)

In what ways are the shepherds good examples of joy, no matter our circumstance?

How will you intentionally seek joy this week?

Like the angels to the shepherds, who has been a messenger of joy to you?