

Sunday December 16th 2018



How often do you hear the statement, “I just want her to be happy.” Happy. Happiness is great... but what if we instead would say, “I want him to have joy.”

Joy, to me, seems supremely greater than happiness. Joy is something my heart deeply desires. It isn't dependent upon circumstances. It's that deep abiding sense of well-being that transcends our situations.

Joy is something deep, soul-reaching, and vibrant.

He saw the joy ahead of him, so he endured death on the cross and ignored the disgrace it brought him.

Hebrews 12:2

When Jesus came to earth as a babe He could only have gone through the humiliation, rejection, and abandonment because of the joy ahead.

What was that joy?

The joy in knowing that He could (did) make a way for each of us to come to the Father through Him so that we could one day be with Him forever. To be joint heirs with Him. That joy was found in His redeeming love. The most perfect kind of love there could ever be.

So today, as we light the third Advent candle, the pink candle, the candle of JOY... we light it not just for Mary's joy in being chosen by God to assist in physically ushering in the King of Kings and Lord of Lords... though that joy was so incredible that she sang scripture, now known as the Magnificat.

*Mary said,
“My soul praises the Lord’s greatness!
My spirit finds its joy in God, my Savior,
because he has looked favorably on me, his humble servant.
“From now on, all people will call me blessed
because the Almighty has done great things to me.
His name is holy.*

Luke 1:46-49

But, we light it for the joy that is ahead. The joy that gave Jesus not just the reason, but the will and perseverance to endure human life, untold suffering, and even death. This incredible joy is what we want to be birthed in our souls.

More than the merriment and festivity of the Christmas season, we want that deep-seated joy to infuse us, body, soul, and mind.

More than anything we want Jesus... who demonstrated what it meant to love beyond measure. We want the joy of Mary, the angels, and the shepherds. Even more, we want the joy that only comes from following Jesus and knowing that one day we will see him face to face and receive all that He has been planning for us.

Life might not be easy for you right now. Might even feel like one crazy curveball after another. Seemingly hitting more walls and closed doors than ever thought possible. Yet, we do not walk alone or abandoned. As Christ followers we have the confidence that not only has Jesus walked ahead of us, experiencing our pain and despair; He walks with us today so we are never alone, encouraging us to lean on Him and receive from Him what we need for each day.

Whatever your circumstance...

Be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.

1 Peter 1:6-8

Joy.

May your heart be filled with the joy that only Jesus brings. And this Christmas may your heart overflow with that joy... bringing light and life and hope to others.

Praying you have a truly joy-filled Christmas...