

Influence Ministries

REDISCOVER CHRISTMAS

LESSON 2

TITLE: FINDING JOY IN OUR DISCOURAGEMENTS.

Nehemiah 8:10

....Today is a special day to our Lord. Don't be sad, because the joy of the LORD will make you strong.
Have you ever been to, or seen photos of Yellowstone.

The wildlife is iconic: the bison and bears, the wolves, the eagles and elk. The mountains are rugged and majestic. So are the waterfalls and rivers.

But then there are the geysers, and if there's one thing that stands out about Yellowstone, it has to be the geysers.

The famous one being "Old Faithful". Old Faithful shoots and spurts huge fountains of water and steam up to 180 feet in the air.

There are other well-known geysers for different reasons, like the Grand Prismatic Geyser. It's the largest hot spring in the U.S., and its kaleidoscope of colors is breathtaking.

What do geysers have to do with rediscovering Christmas? Because geysers are like joy.

And similar to geysers, joy bubbles and overflows and has to find its way out in some way or another.

Sometimes, and for some people, that's a big bursting eruption like Old Faithful.

But other times, joy might be a slow rolling burble.

It might even be a little muddy or murky or slower to make its way out.

But no matter what's surrounding it or influencing it, joy has its source deep within.

Joy is the trait we're exploring today on this third Sunday of Advent.

If you've been journeying with us the past few weeks toward Christmas, you know that we have been celebrating Advent.

As a quick recap, the word Advent means "coming" or "arrival," and the season is marked by expectation, waiting, anticipation, and longing.

Advent is not just an extension of Christmas—it is a season that links the past, present, and future.

Each week, we are focusing on a different attribute of God represented in the coming of Jesus: hope, peace, joy, and love.

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Through these traits, we are learning how we can rediscover Christmas, despite the challenges, hardships, pains, and difficulties we might be experiencing.

Because He has come to be God with Us, we can experience joy no matter what discouragement we may be going through.

There's a lot of joy throughout the biblical Christmas story.

But it's important to note that this joy isn't separate from pain and disappointment.

In fact, much of this joy is born out of long disappointment and grief.

IT'S OK TO BE JOYFUL AND HAPPY.

We've probably all heard joy described in contrast to happiness.

I've probably even described the emotions in a dichotomy that divides the two basically along these lines:

Happiness is fleeting and temporary.

Joy is deeper and more fulfilling.

Often in our Christian culture, the two get split into happiness as secular and less valuable or fulfilling, and joy as spiritual and more important or fulfilling.

In actuality, the Bible doesn't make any distinction between joy and happiness. They are essentially different words for the same thing.

In the original Hebrew and Greek terms used in the Bible to describe joy and happiness are essentially interchangeable.

It's OK to want to be happy and joyful, and it's OK to enjoy those emotions.

There is great joy in the Christmas season, and it's good to embrace and celebrate that joy.

For those of you who find yourselves driven by obligation and busyness and guilt in this season, it's OK to stop, and say no, and pause and embrace a part of the season that brings you personal happiness.

Preaching about, Finding Joy in Our Discouragements.

And to those of you who find Christmas to be a painful, difficult season, who are hurting or grieving personally or feeling discouraged by this tumultuous year we've been going through.

It's OK to feel and to embrace joy. God sees you no matter where you are on the emotional spectrum of happiness.

My point here is that our longing for happiness and joy is a natural desire that God has placed within us as a reflection of His own joyful nature.

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JOY IS OUR STRENGTH.

Because this is a time of uncertainty, God will bring us back and restoring our city and our hearts, and because our source of strength is the very joy of the Lord.

It's what fuels us and sustains us.

Our true source of happiness, joy, and fulfillment comes from God.

Christmas is a season of joy because the Messiah has brought joy into the world and provided us the way of ultimate fulfillment and life.

I'm not suggesting that this is a don't worry, be happy, put on a plastic smile and fake it kind of joy.

Sometimes this joy is a rushing fountain erupting from our spirits, and sometimes it is a thick, slow bubble to the surface.

Wherever you find yourself today, let me encourage you that the joy of the Lord can be felt no matter what we are facing.

WE CAN CHOOSE JOY.

There are a lot of uses of the word rejoice in the Bible.

Rejoice is the verb form of joy. It's the action of feeling or expressing joy and delight.

It begins with the prefix re-.

English words that start with re-, this prefix means once more, or again, or a return to.

So, to rejoice is to return to joy.

It's a choice and an action we can take to return to joy.

That's where the re- comes in.

That's where we must return regularly, daily, constantly to Jesus, our source of joy.

It's why rejoicing is our process of refueling our tank, restoring our strength, and renewing our spirits.

It's reconnecting with our Savior.

Rediscover Christmas this year by embracing joy, no matter what we're going through. Remember each day the source of our joy.

Let's seek our happiness, not in the seasonal trappings and traditions around us,
BUT IN RETURNING CONSTANTLY TO OUR SOURCE OF JOY.