

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth**  
**December 13th, 2020**  
**Third Sunday in Advent**  
**Guest Worship Leader: Rev. John McIntyre**

**Welcome and Announcements**

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**Call to Worship**

(Psalm 105:1-6)

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!

**Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!**

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!

**Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!**

Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

**O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones!**

**(ALL) He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.**

**Prayer of Invocation**

Our loving God and heavenly Father, you are the joy of this day, and the hope for every day to come. Move in our midst we pray. Fill us with your Spirit, and reveal yourself to us in ways that renew us and enable us by faith, to behold something of your wisdom, power and love. May our words, as well as our actions, and even the secret thoughts of our hearts, be a part of your worship this hour. For we pray in the name of Jesus your only begotten Son our Saviour, who loved us and gave himself for us. **Amen.**

**Hymn #118**

**“Hark the Glad Sound”**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWa9Raw9Kes>**

1. Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes,  
the Saviour promised long;  
let every heart prepare a throne,  
and every voice a song!

2. You come the prisoners to release  
in Satan's bondage held;  
the gates of brass before you burst,  
the iron fetters yield.

3. You come the broken heart to bind,  
the wounded soul to cure,  
to bring the treasures of God's grace,  
good tidings for the poor.

4. Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
your welcome shall proclaim,  
and heaven's eternal arches ring  
with your most honoured name.

### **Call to Confession**

The psalmist says: *"I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."*

### **Prayer of Confession**

Gracious God our Father, we confess that we have longed too much for the comforts of this world. We have loved your gifts more than you the giver. In your mercy, help us to see that all the things we pine for are mere shadows, but you are substance; that they are as quicksand, but you are the true Rock; that they are shifting, but you are the steadfast anchor. We ask for your forgiveness on the merits of Jesus Christ. Accept his worthiness for our unworthiness, his sinlessness for our transgressions, his fullness for our emptiness, his glory for our shame, his righteousness for our dead works, his death for our life. We pray in Jesus's name. **Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

(I Jn 1:8-9) *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

(Psa 32:1) *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.**

**For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,**

**Forever and ever. Amen**

**Hymn #119 (Verses 1 - 3)****“Hope is a star”** (No lyrics on screen)[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuZgdGD\\_Aq4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuZgdGD_Aq4)

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night,  
leading us on till the morning is bright.

Refrain:

When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

2. Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,  
giving a promise of safety and worth.

3. Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,  
telling the world that the Saviour is born.

**“Lighting the Advent Candle of Joy”**

We are called to be people of joy. God desires people who hear and respond to the promise of salvation.

**Lord, may we be those joyful people.**

God calls for us to be those who are not overcome by the world's sorrow but seek to be molded by the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Lord, may we be those joyful people.**

Holy Spirit, guide us through the daily discouragements of life and may our joy inspire those we come in contact with.

**Lord, may we be those joyful people.**

**(Light the pink candle of joy.)**

Let us pray together.

**Thank you, God, for the joy you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your joy with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.**

## Responsive Reading                      Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

**Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then they said among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them.”**

The LORD has done great things for us;  
we are glad.

**Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like streams in the Negeb!**

Those who sow in tears  
shall reap with shouts of joy!

**He who goes out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.**

**Ministry of Music:**

**“Angels from the Realms of Glory”  
by Richard & Jay Hendry**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nmfx2bMXdwQ&feature=youtu.be>

**First Scripture Reading:**

**Isaiah 12: 1-6**

### **The LORD Is My Strength and My Song**

**1** You will say in that day:

“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,  
for though you were angry with me,  
your anger turned away,  
that you might comfort me.

**2** “Behold, God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid;  
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,  
and he has become my salvation.”

**3** With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. **4** And you will say in that day:

“Give thanks to the LORD,  
call upon his name,

make known his deeds among the peoples,  
proclaim that his name is exalted.

**5** “Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be made known in all the earth.

**6** Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

## **Second Scripture Reading:**

**Luke 1:46-55**

### **Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat**

**46** And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

**47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

**48** for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

**49** for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

**50** And his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

**51** He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

**52** he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;

**53** he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.

**54** He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,

**55** as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Prayer for Illumination**

Spirit of the Living God, turn on the light of truth and wake up our hearts by the  
Word we now declare and ponder. **Amen.**

**“Advent Speaks of Joy”**

Read the Text: Psa 100

When you think about the first advent (or coming) of the Lord Jesus it was, as the Angels proclaimed, *good news of great joy*. But at the same time, their joyous announcement was delivered amid the common and unsettling predicaments of life in a messy world.

For example doubting Zechariah, while carrying out his duties as a priest, was struck dumb by the angel announcing the birth of a son to him and his wife Elizabeth. His wife Elizabeth had been dejected for years because she was barren and had no children. Mary is to be the mother of our Lord and not yet married. Joseph is thrust into embarrassment because of Mary's pregnancy. And then following Christ's birth, he and Mary along with the child are forced to flee their homeland for their lives.

Yet all but Joseph (who has no lines in the biblical account) expresses joy despite the adversity they experience. Elizabeth filled with joy, praises God for taking away her reproach (Lk 1:25). We also read that Zechariah spoke and blessed God (Lk 1:64). At the news of her upcoming pregnancy Mary blurts out her joy: *My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour* (Lk 1:46-47).

As we enter *the "Season to be jolly,"* sometimes we don't feel like decking the halls with boughs of holly. For those who have lost loved ones, this can be the loneliest time of the year. In a world that glorifies materialism, those who are struggling financially may find it to be a most disappointing season.

So as we are gathered here this morning in this season of joy, maybe the person seated where you are, far from being filled with joy, is experiencing some kind of disappointment. You see, Christians are not immune from distress. Sometimes disappointments happen and sap us of our joy. What can we do to instill, maintain, replenish & restore our joy? We can follow along with the shepherds hurrying to visit the one of whom the angels spoke.

You see, the **source** of great joy announced by the angels was to be found not in the things of this world, but in the true and living God who has visited us earthlings and in particular his own people in the person of his only begotten son Jesus Christ.

In speaking of our Lord's incarnation Isaiah tells us (Isa 61:3), that Christ was sent, *"...To grant to those who mourn in Zion - to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified."* In other words, Jesus has come to provide for beauty, gladness, praise, & strength of spirit to the sorrowful, to the faint hearted and the depressed and to thereby transform those who receive him into renewed joyful masterpieces that glorify him.

Psalm 100 – Can serve as a *"Joy-Tonic"* for heaviness of heart, for it teaches at least two things concerning joy. The first being that true joy is founded in God and

what we know to be true of Him. And secondly that joy is a natural spiritual response to knowing Him.

## I. True joy is founded in God and what we know to be true of Him.

If you and I are going to exchange, *a spirit of heaviness* (KJV) for a garment of praise, and be people characterized by joy and joyful expectation, then it is vital that we know and believe who and what God is. What do (Psa 100: 3, 5) tell us about Him? They tell us there is something we need to remember concerning our Lord when it says, *Know that the LORD, he is God.* He alone is the one & only living and true God, infinite in his being and in His perfection. (1 Tim.1:17) describes Him as, *“The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.”* (Jer 10:10) declares that, *“The LORD is the true God; He is the living God...the everlasting King.”* In (Rev. 4:8), the four living creatures revealed there, *“...never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”*

God is, in the majesty of His being, unchangeable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, and almighty. According to (Rom. 11:36) He is awesome! *“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”* This is the true invisible God over the universe, now made visible in the person of Jesus!

But the text gives us another key aspect about God that we need to know. It says; know that the **LORD** is God. The term **LORD** is the name by which, God personally identifies Himself to His people. That makes it a name loaded with meaning for it's the name that he has revealed to us to elicit a personal response. LORD is God's covenant name to His own. It's His term of endearment toward His children. You see, not only is he the God, who is awesome in his transcendence; he is the God who is close and who is personal.

He is the true and living God who, relates to people within a love/faith relationship. He loves, he cares, and he reaches out to us, and shows us it to be true in the coming of his son Jesus Christ. Knowing this truth about our great God & Saviour loving us and condescending to us, is key to producing joy in us. And it gets better! For the text goes on to say, *Know ... it is he who has made us and we are his.*

There are no “self-made” followers of Jesus Christ! They are all “God made” followers of Christ. It is God who gives his people new birth and adoption into his family. By grace His Spirit regenerates us as displayed by and through our faith in Jesus. He creates us at birth and by his Spirit through the Gospel recreates us at our second birth, transferring us from eternal death to eternal life. As new creatures in Christ Jesus, (Eph 2:10) tells us that we are *His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus* for Himself, his service and his glory. This gives us purpose in and for life, and

good reason for joy! (I Cor 1:30) “... *By His doing you are in Christ Jesus ...*” What a reason for joy!

Then too we are to know we are His people & the sheep of His pasture. The Lord has repossessed us & made us His own people. (I Pet 2:9-10) tells us that “... *you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his (God's) own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*” God makes believers in his Son Jesus, his own people.

In addition, (Psa 100:5) would have us know that “*The LORD is good.*” Some people have difficulty believing that God is good. Maybe it's because they only focus and contemplate, the things that are twisted by sin in the fallen world. By way of illustration, a speaker took a large piece of paper and made a black dot in the center of it with a marking pen. Then he held the paper up before the audience and asked them what they saw. Without exception, all they could see was a ‘black mark’. They had completely overlooked the most important thing of all, the ‘sheet of paper’.

We are often distracted by, dot-like disappointments or painful & drawn out experiences. We are prone to forget, the countless blessings we receive from the Lord. But like the sheet of paper with the blemish on it, the good things are far more important & worthy of our focus, than the letdowns that often monopolize our thoughts and our lives. Someone has written:

*“As you travel down life’s pathway, May this ever be your goal:  
Keep your eye upon the doughnut, And not upon the hole!”*

Sin and its affects is the dark hole in this world. But the good news of the coming of Jesus Christ held out in the gospel gives us a perspective that makes it but a speck. Jesus says, (Jn 16:33) “*In me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*” Jesus the Christ has overcome the world with all its adversities. And so amid the slings and arrows of what we might call outrageous fortune, we can experience a profound joy even amid our tears.

Another provider to joy is to know (Psa 100:5) that; God’s *steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations*. Know this; you can count on God’s faithful love for you. God’s love is everlasting just as He is everlasting. (Jer. 31:3) reminds us of God’s word to us when he says, “*I have loved you with an everlasting love...*” A poet captures this fortifying truth well in these words;

*Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas, Star and angels gave the sign.*

God’s word is unchanging just as He is unchanging. He promises to be faithful to His people i.e. all generations and he will be forever because by his very nature, God is love. Thus his steadfast love endures forever. Listen as Scripture reiterates

the nature of God's love for his people; (Heb 13:5) *"I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."* Then again in (Titus 3:4-7) we read that *". . . When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior . . ."*

There is, and always will be, an infinite wealth of God's steadfast love & mercy for his people. He has proven it by giving us His Son; The sign & seal of His promises to His people. True joy is founded upon God and what we know to be true of Him. Those who belong to Him through His son Jesus have great & glorious reason for joy & rejoicing. As the hymn writer John Newton writes,

*"Solid joys and lasting treasure  
None but Zion's children know."*

## **II. True joy is a likely spiritual response to knowing Him.**

No one who knows God and accepts what he has done for them should repress the joy that it brings. The gospel of God's love displayed in Jesus Christ is *"Good news of great joy!"* God has himself come to earth in the person of Jesus, the babe in the manger! (Titus 2:11) describes it for us in these words; *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people."* That ought to generate joy in the hearts of all mankind. And so (Psa 100:1) prompts all the earth to *"Make a joyful noise to the LORD."*

If all creation knew & accepted God's righteous reign, all creation would surely shout for joy. When our Lord returns – *"With shout of acclamation,"* the creation will itself be renewed and enjoy *the freedom of the glory of the children of God* (Rom 8:21). The heavens will be glad, the earth will rejoice, the fields will rejoice/trees of the forest will sing for joy (Psa. 96).

Joy can freely emerge out of sorrow and affliction as we consider and anticipate Christ's return... at which time, our redemption will be complete, the renewed creation will cease its groaning and our joy will be full in the glory of the children of God. At present believers possess the first fruits of the Spirit. Thus we have great warrant for possessing and declaring joy in our Lord's salvation. That's what sustained the Prophet Habakkuk. As he foresaw calamity coming he wrote these encouraging words, (Hab 3:17-18) *"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation"*

Someone has written: *It is easy to rejoice and be glad in the Lord when things are going splendidly, and such joy is appropriate. But when things are disastrous for us,*

as F. F. Bruce comments, “to rejoice in God for his own sake is evidence of pure faith. By such faith, God makes us steady in life’s most difficult circumstances, just as He keeps the deer’s feet steady on the narrowest, most terrifying mountain paths, guiding it to security.”

This is the kind of faith that says - I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

As we take joy in the God of our salvation we are called to, “*Serve the LORD with gladness.*” Knowing God makes serving him a joy. Knowing we are his and that he is ours generates spiritual joy and freedom. As children of a loving Father, we are freed up to serve him & take pleasure in His service. We can freely do so, readily, willingly, cheerfully, rejoicing in Him. The smallest service, even giving the thirsty a cup of water, is much when God is in it.

The joy we have within by virtue of knowing and trusting in our God, is not easily contained. The invitation is given to express our joy I.e. *Come into his presence with singing... Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise... Give thanks to him; bless his name.*

These invitations call forth joyful expressions of praise from God’s people. They present us with a picture of the enthusiasm of God’s ancient people entering Jerusalem; Of His children shouting for joy, and singing the praises of their God and Saviour. How much greater then, should our joy be as his people in coming together as His people? For we enter His gates, not looking forward to an atoning Redeemer, but standing on His accomplished redemption on the cross, and looking forward to His glorious second coming,

The text commands us to come before Him, with joyful singing, & thanksgiving. It calls us to praise and bless His name – Out Loud! We aren’t supposed to keep the joy to ourselves. We are to spread his joy around in keeping with the psalmist in (Psa 71:23) where he writes: *My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you; And my soul, which you have redeemed.*

If you and I are not expressing some measure of joy, there’s something wrong with our religion. But you may say, “You don’t know what’s going on in my life.” “You don’t know how big my problems are.” Your problems and heartaches may be great. But are your problems bigger than your God?

How big is your God? How well do you know him? Could it be that over time you have forgotten that your Lord and Saviour is bigger than your problem. Maybe you have forgotten that we are loved with an everlasting love, and that even in times of adversity, underneath are the everlasting arms.

God loves you and has shown it in the first coming of his son. We can rest in that love, knowing *that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39)* for our lives are *hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* (Col 3:3-4)

Are any of us short on joy? Then we need to hurry & follow the shepherds to again see Jesus, and remind ourselves that God is our heavenly Father. Remember again, that in His son Jesus Christ he has given us the privileged position as His children. Then our response can be one of joy, even in disappointment and trial.

That's the basis for joy in all circumstances - Is that your basis for joy?

As our Foundation for joy, God has bestowed upon us,

- An acceptance that can never be questioned. (Eph. 1:6)
- An inheritance that can never be lost (I Peter 1:3-5)
- A deliverance that can never be excelled (2 Cor. 1:10)
- A grace that can never be limited (2 Cor. 12:9)
- A hope that can never be disappointed. (Heb. 6:18, 19)
- A bounty that can never be withdrawn. (Col. 3:21-23)
- A joy that need never be diminished (John 15:11)
- A nearness to God that can never be reversed (Eph. 2:13)
- A peace that can never be disturbed (John 14:27)
- A righteousness that can never be tarnished (2 Cor. 5:21)
- A salvation that can never be canceled (Heb. 5:9)

And that's the good news of a great JOY – for all people

- Have you received the good news? Do you want joy?
- Follow the shepherds to look upon Jesus!

*Thanks be to God for Jesus - His indescribable gift. Amen.*

### Hymn #153:

**“Joy to the World”** (No lyrics on screen)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g08tDBIHr2o>

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:  
let earth receive its King;  
let every heart prepare him room  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:  
let us our songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
nor thorns infest the ground;  
he comes to make his blessings flow

far as the curse is found,  
 far as the curse is found,  
 far as, far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace,  
 and makes the nations prove  
 the glories of his righteousness  
 and wonders of his love,  
 and wonders of his love,  
 and wonders, wonders of his love.

### Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) **We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer.** This note from our treasurer.

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

### Invitation to Offering

Even the smallest inclination toward generosity saved Joseph's life, when his brother Reuben talked the brothers into sparing him for the moment. Out of that small token of generosity, God brought about great and mighty results. God can yield an abundant harvest of joy and hope for each person touched by the ministry of this church. Let present our offerings to God in gratitude and praise.

### Offertory Prayer

Compassionate Father, thank you that you are our strength and our song, you fill our hearts with joy. May we give our offerings to you with gladness and joy. Everything we have belongs to you and we rejoice to give some of your abundant gifts back to you. Bless the tithes and offerings we give today. Let the majesty of the Father be the light that guides us, the compassion of the Son be the love that inspires us and the presence of the Spirit be the power that empowers us. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**

### Pastoral Prayer

**Closing Hymn #114:****“Emmanuel, Emmanuel”**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4V9rgxwclU>

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,  
his name is called Emmanuel.  
God with us, revealed in us,  
his name is called Emmanuel.

**Benediction**

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope... looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Rom 15:13, Heb 12:2)*