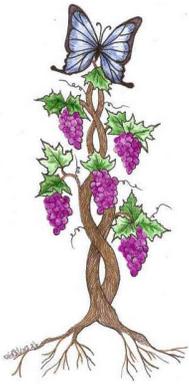


*Nurturing Faith...
Every Day in Every Way*



December 16, 2018

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Isaiah 12:2-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:7-18

The Joy of Christmas

Object: A wrapped Christmas gift



Look at this beautiful Christmas gift -- there are already a lot of gifts under the tree at our house. Are there a lot of gifts under your tree? Have you looked to see how many of the gifts have your name on them?

I heard about a little boy who checked the presents under the tree every day. As he checked to see if any new presents had been added, he grouped the presents together according to the names on the gifts. Then, after he had them arranged, he counted the gifts.

One day, he discovered that his sister had more gifts under the tree than he did. He became very upset and ran into the kitchen where his mother was preparing dinner.

"Katie has more presents under the Christmas tree than I do!" the little boy cried. Then he turned and ran from the room. He went to his room, closed the door, and sat pouting. He couldn't even enjoy the Christmas season because he was so upset that someone else had more gifts under the tree than he did. What that this little boy did not understand was that the real joy of Christmas is not in how many gifts we receive, but in sharing what we have with others.

John the Baptist was sent to prepare people for the coming of Jesus. He told them to repent of their sins and prepare their hearts for the coming of the promised Messiah.

"What should we do?" they asked.

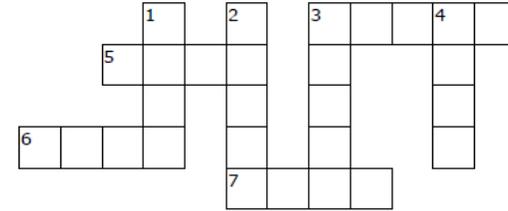
John answered them, "If you have two coats, give one of them to the one who has none. If you have food, share it with those who have none."

That is the same message we need to hear today as we look forward to Christmas. If we want to experience the real joy that Jesus wants for us, then we must learn to share! By sharing what God has so generously given to us, we will receive an even greater gift -- the gift of joy.

Today we light the third candle on our Advent wreath -- the candle of joy.

Loving God, help us to learn that it is in giving that we receive the greater gift -- the gift of joy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 3. An item of clothing that is worn on the upper half of the body
- 5. To have very little money or possessions
- 6. The opposite of bad
- 7. A tall plant that has a trunk, branches, and leaves

DOWN

- 1. What we eat
- 2. The sweet food that grows on a tree
- 3. To give part of what you have to someone else
- 4. The part of a tree that grows under the ground

ROOT	TREE	POOR	SHARE
FOOD	GOOD	FRUIT	SHIRT

Activity: The children can be given some construction paper and a pattern of a bell. JOY can be written on their bells and add glitter and decorations to the bells. Ornaments make beautiful gifts!

Discussion Question: Joy can be described as your heart singing. What brings you joy?

Family Table Prayer for December: Round this table, here to pray. First we thank you for the day. For our family and our friends, gifts of grace that heaven lends. Living water, daily bread, countless blessings our God sends. Thank you, Jesus, for them all, for the great ones and the small. Amen.

December Memory Verse: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11

The Candle of Joy

