



What brings you joy? A new puppy with snuggly fur and a bundle of bouncy energy? Good coffee and conversation with a dear friend? Your favorite team pulling off a big win? Peppermint Milkshakes? Christmas is often called 'the most wonderful time of the year.' With twinkling lights, festive music, tasty treats, colorful gift wrap, programs and parties, there are many joyful things going on, but these things come and go in a month. Sometimes it doesn't take much to scratch beneath the surface and see that our joy is running on empty because of broken relationships, health challenges, or frustrating circumstances.

Where can we find Joy that lasts beyond the season? In Luke 2:8-20 we read the story of some unsuspecting shepherds watching over their sheep on a hillside. Suddenly the dark of night was pierced by the overwhelming glory of the Lord. The shepherds were terrified, and the voice of the Angel of the Lord rang out, 'Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'

How is it possible that the arrival of a baby could bring great joy for all people?! Of course, the answer comes next. This was not any baby, this was the promised Savior, Christ the Lord – in a name - Jesus.

Christmas is a season of great joy, not because of all the festivities (although those can be very nice indeed), and not because all our problems go away (there's a difference between joy and happiness). Christmas is a season of great joy because the arrival of Jesus means that our sins can be forgiven, our relationship with God can be restored, and we can have renewed hope and purpose beyond this life in Him.

The arrival of Jesus means that we can have Joy through the challenges of this life because God keeps his promises, He sees us, and He is with us.

CBC at Home & Advent Devotional December 17, 2023

JOY
the Shepherd's Candle
Sermon: Luke 2

Holy God, we sing 'Joy to the World,
[You] have come,' and rightfully
so for only You are the source from
which streams of true joy flow.

A close and everliving joy that
reaches into the shadows that are
cast upon us in our pilgrim journey.

Lord, even in moments
when we are overcome
with sadness and despair,
instead of the twisted, disfigured
thorn, let the blossoms of the
myrtle tree stand as a symbol of
resilient joy, may your incarnation
be the spirit that whispers the hope
and renewal of this season.

Lord God, may Your joy cause
our voices now to burst into song,
and may this overflow be to the
Glory of Christ in whose name
we find salvation. Amen.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

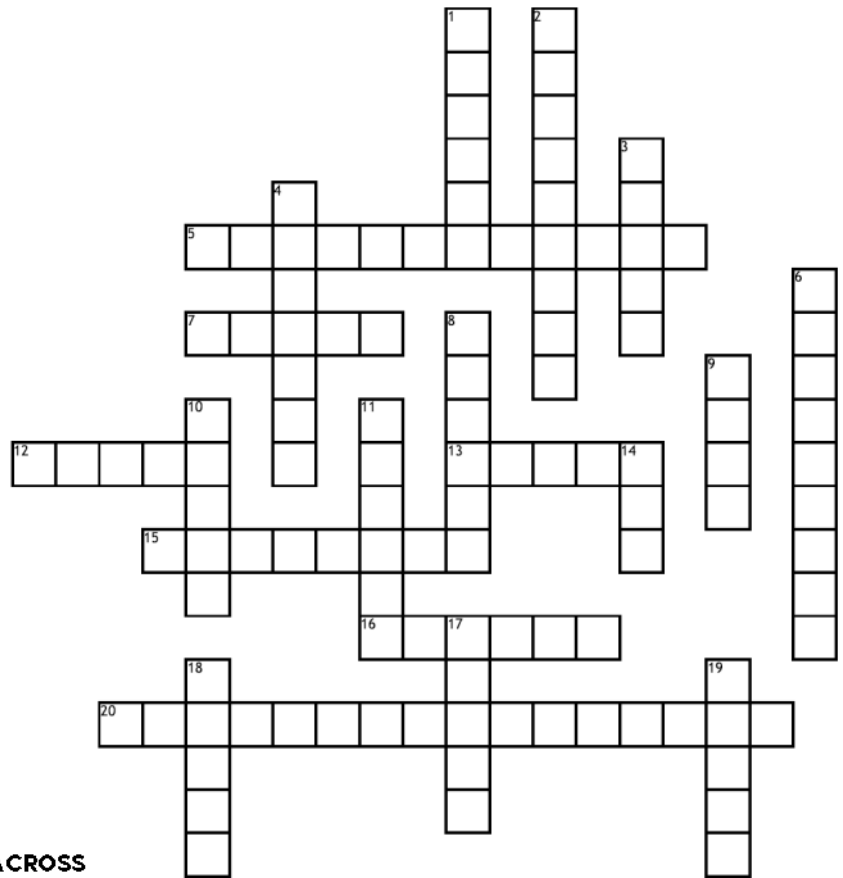
- What brings you joy?
- What is the difference between happiness and joy?
- How can we find joy, even when we're facing big challenges or discouraging situations?
- What is it about the arrival of Jesus that makes it, "Good news of Great joy?" What are some specific ways that the gospel of Jesus brings you joy? ?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS FROM THE SERMON (Luke 2)

- How many times have you read the accounting of Christ's birth in Luke 2? Have you noticed anything different or more so as you have grown in faith? Why?
- Who is a good storyteller that you know? What makes someone a good storyteller?
- Is there anything that particularly stood out to you from the sermon?

FAMILY QUESTIONS

- Why is the Christmas story one we retell every year? What is your favorite family story that we retell? What is a story that reminds you that you belong?
- How can we take time during the advent to show people the love of Jesus?



ACROSS

- What was one gift the Magi gave Jesus?
- How many Magi are recorded in the Bible that came to see Jesus?
- What was the name of Jesus' mother?
- What did the Magi follow to find Jesus?
(two words)
- Where did God tell them to go after He was born?
- Where was He raised once He returned?
- Where was Jesus born?
- What was Jesus wrapped in?

DOWN

- What was special about Jesus's mother?
- In what city was Jesus born?
- Who was born in the manger?
- Which angel appeared to Mary?
- In what city did King Herod live?
- What was Jesus's father's name?
- How were the family warned that someone wanted to kill Jesus?
- Who said "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men"?
- Children in the region of what age were to be killed?
- What/who talked to the shepherds?
- From whom is Jesus descended?
- Who was the king of Judaea at the time of the birth of Jesus?



WEEKLY PRAYER

- Our Men & Women in Uniform
- Double Portion Soup Kitchen, Fox Valley
- Clyde Rasmussen, Elder
- Michael Hansen, Assoc. Pastor of Student & Young Adult Ministries
- Community of Parents Lifestage & class
- Faith United Methodist Church, Neenah
- Those who do not yet have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus (Col 4:2-4)

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

And again Isaiah says,
 "The root of Jesse will come,
 even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
 in him will the Gentiles hope."
 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.

Romans 15:12-13(ESV)