

Advent Day 1

Joy Comes to the World

Hey Lifegate. Welcome to our first Advent Devotional of the Christmas season. My name is Bri and I'm so glad to spend this time with you today. Over the next four weeks, you'll have the opportunity to listen along to two devotionals each week, released on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as we prepare for Christmas and lean into the joy that Jesus brought to the world.

If we were sitting together having a conversation right now, I'd love to ask you about your Christmas decorations. There seem to be a couple types of people: those who have waited until right about now, after Thanksgiving, to decorate for Christmas. And the rebels who decorated a month ago. No matter which side you're on, I'm sure you have a great reason for that. But for me, something about the slightest shift in the weather in mid-October, and I already have the Christmas Classics in my Spotify rotation. I understand there is life to be lived and other holidays to celebrate and the beautiful fall season to be enjoyed... but all the excitement and anticipation of the Christmas season is just too strong for me! It's not just December 24th and 25th that I love, but it's the joyful expectancy of the weeks leading up to Christmas.

While we're adjusting our homes and schedules to accommodate the busy and bustling season already, it's the perfect time to get our hearts ready as well. The Advent season is the opportunity for us to remember and

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prepare for the coming of our Savior, Jesus, who literally brought Joy into the world. Joy – not just the feeling you get sipping on that first peppermint mocha of the season, or gazing at the Christmas lights. But a deep, lasting, supernatural joy. Your cup running over type of joy. A joy that only comes from knowing the One who made you, formed you, and gave everything to restore relationship with you.

If you're reading about Jesus' birth in Luke 2, you'll see starting in verse eight that an angel approached the shepherds in the field to tell them about the coming of Jesus and said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." And this is still true for our lives today. Because of Jesus, we can know and be with our Father. Because of Jesus, we are restored and welcomed into everlasting life with our Creator. Jesus is the fulfillment of all our deepest desires. Jesus is the good news we all ache for. And Jesus' entire life's work brought joy to God's people as he preached the good news of the Kingdom.

Through encountering Jesus who embodies joy, we can become a steadfast, joy-filled kind of person. God delivers joy to our world through the gift of Jesus.

Thinking from that perspective... are you feeling as excited for the season as I am?! I recall all the years growing up with the Christmas decorations and signs that read, "Hope, Peace, Love, Joy"... and I always thought, well that sounds sweet and festive. But when I begin to

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realize the magnitude and sufficiency of our Savior, and that He has the power and desire to fill every void of my heart, Joy becomes more than a saying we see on a holiday card.

So as we seek the Lord and celebrate the gift of Jesus in the coming days, I invite you to really open your hands and heart to the revelation of Joy the Lord wants to show you. Whether the feeling of joy is coming easy to you, or joy feels a little further out of reach, God's promise is the same.

Zephaniah 3:17 amplified version says, The Lord your God is in your midst, A Warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with joy; He will be quiet in His love [making no mention of your past sins], He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

Father, thank you for the gift of Joy through Jesus. Thank you that you love us so much that you remembered us, pursued us, and sent your only Son to save us. God, we don't want this season to pass by in a blink without drawing closer to you. We want more of you, Lord. Speak to us. Give us new revelations of the joy that only comes from you. I pray you restore the hope and joy of every person listening right now. God, we trust the work that you're doing in each of us, in Lifegate, and on earth. We love you Lord. Amen.