

**INTRO**

- What do you like to do for fun?

**READ**

Luke 2:10-11; Isaiah 52:7

**REFLECT & RESPOND**

The third week of advent means we reflect on the good news of JOY. Now, biblically and historically, the terms joy and happy are used interchangeably with words like delight, gladness, blessed. Yet, it seems appropriate we make a distinction between happiness and joy at least culturally.

*Qu: What are some sources of happiness for you?*

**GOOD NEWS OF JOY**

2020 has revealed the fragility of some sources of happiness. Yet, God invites us to be a happy, joyful people despite circumstances and so we need a joy that is substantial. We can define this kind of Joy as:

**Joy is internal gladness,  
through gratitude for God's grace,  
that transcends external circumstances.**

**Internal Gladness:**

- Joy is an emotion as well as a strong response ('rejoice' is mentioned over 200x in scripture) drawing from the internal reality of God's presence within us (Ps 16:11, Gal 5:22).

**Gratitude & Grace:**

- Joy = Grace x Gratitude (The greater our awareness of grace combined with gratitude for that grace, increases our capacity for Joy).

**Transcends External Circumstances:**

- One of the biggest differences between joy and happiness is that joy has capacity for adversity, disappointment, sorrow, even death.

*Qu: In what other ways is joy different to happiness?*

To rejoice in a year like 2020 isn't just counterintuitive, it's an **act of defiance**.

**CULTIVATING DEFIANT JOY**

Read Hab 3:17-19. Habakkuk provides us a blueprint for how to cultivate a defiant joy:

- **Defiant joy faces reality**; it doesn't ignore, deny nor diminish reality. (v17)
- **Defiant joy resolves** to respond to reality with joy in God (v18)
- **Defiant joy finds its reason** and source in God (v19)

*"The joy offered by God is different from the one promised at the car dealership or shopping mall. God is not interested in putting a temporary smile on your face. He wants to deposit a resilient hope in your heart. He has no interest in giving you a shallow happiness that melts in the heat of adversity." — Max Lucado*

This Advent may you be encouraged and resolved that Jesus really is **good news of great joy for all people**.

*Qu: As you reflect on 2020, what does cultivating a defiant joy mean to you?*

**RESPOND & PRAY**

- Pray for greater awareness of and gratitude for God's grace in each other's lives
- Pray for an infilling of joy that Jesus promises (Jn 15:11)
- Pray for opportunity to minister to others in this time