



Blessings on you as we mark the Third Sunday of Advent! We are halfway to Christmas. Today we light the pink candle in our Advent wreath and continue our celebration of the 300th anniversary of the beloved hymn “Joy to the World.” This week we look at unabashed Joy – the joy that simply overflows in spite of how things look. When Mary found herself pregnant before marriage, joy was not the word to describe the situation. However, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and so Mary overflowed in songs of joy and justice! We are glad you are here this day! Welcome to Epworth!

EPWORTH: a United Methodist Church
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VISION: Exploring Faith, Embracing Community

MISSION: Inviting All, Finding Your Place, Connecting to God, Demonstrating Care

☞ WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY ☞

☞ GATHER ☞

Expansion of our Hearts

“Make the Blessings Known: Unabashed Joy”

Advent III

We gather together to worship the One Who is Joy and as we come together, our hearts are expanded. We remember that the heavens declare God’s praise as the sun rises and light multiplies. And we witness that all of nature (including us) yearns to reach and expand toward the Light so that all might know joy.

Gathering Music

Congregational Carol Sing

UMH: #202-246 / FWS: #2089-2100

Welcome, Announcements (No Passing the Peace here)

Todd

Focusing on Unabashed Joy: We continue our worship series that features the 300th anniversary of the hymn, “Joy to the World.” Sometimes it is difficult to see joy when so much in the world feels out of sync with joyful expression. As we have been proclaiming, and will continue to come into focus today, joy does not depend on everything being right with the world. Indeed, Mary’s world was completely upside down having found out she was pregnant before her marriage. It was dangerous, even. But this does not stop her from unabashedly singing out, with all of heaven and nature, that what was about to be born would turn the world “right side out.”

[Advent Candle Readers come to the wreath]

Song

Heaven and Nature Sing

[sung with an echo from the congregation/choir throughout]

Sing a new song to the Lord. Lift your hearts with gratitude

Sing a new song to the Lord. Lift your hearts with gratitude

And Joy, Unabashed Joy

Your steadfast love and faithfulness is ever present in our lives.

Your steadfast love and faithfulness is ever present in our lives.

With Joy, Unabashed Joy

Advent Reader

Bill & Kathy Shook

Let the voices of all people blend in harmony, in unison let the people magnify the Beloved!

We light the third candle on the Advent Wreath symbolizing Joy. Let us pray:

Holy God, you provide the source of our joy. It runs deep and wide underneath all of life.

When we are tempted to depend on others for happiness, draw us back to you, for you are the Light that shines for us always. Help us to shine that light from within us through our own Unabashed Joy.

P: Let us make your blessings known in our hearts this day.

Let us make your blessings known in our church this day.

Let us make your blessings known in the world this day...in the name of Joy. Amen.

Song

We sing. We sing. Joy to the World. Heaven and nature sing

Joy to the World. Heaven and nature sing. With Joy. Unabashed Joy

***Passing the Peace:** You are invited to pass the peace by saying, "May you have amazing joy" to the people around you.

***Opening Song**

GIVE THIS CHRISTMAS AWAY

What if I told you you had the pow'r to give someone hope beyond their wildest dreams?

What if I told you it's right there in your hands, in your hands?

It's hard to imagine how something so small can make all the difference, tear down the tallest wall.

What if December looked different this year? What if we all just give this Christmas away?

If there's love in your heart, don't let it stay there. Give this Christmas away,

and your life will be changed by the gift you receive when you give this Christmas away.

It's feeding the hungry, serving the poor. It's telling the orphan, "You're not forgotten anymore."

It's doing what love does, even when no one's watching you.

Give this Christmas away. If there's love in your heart, don't let it stay there.

Give this Christmas away, and your life will be changed by the gift you receive

when you give this Christmas away.

For God so loved the world that He gave us all His Son,
so we could be His hands, His feet, His love, His love.

What if I told you you had the pow'r to give someone hope far beyond their wildest dreams?
What if December looked different this year?

*Yeah, what if we all just give this Christmas away? If there's love in your heart, don't let it stay there.
Give this Christmas away, and your life will be changed by the gift you receive
when you give this Christmas away. Give this Christmas away.
You have the power, just give it away. Give Christmas away. Give it away. Give Christmas away.*¹

✠ RECEPTION OF GOD'S WORD ✠

Children's Celebration

Terre Walton

MY SOUL MAGNIFIES THE LORD

Good news of great joy for every woman, every man.
This will be a sign to you, a baby born in Bethlehem.

(Pre-Chorus) Come and worship, do not be afraid.

A company of angels, glory in the highest.
And on the Earth peace among those on whom His favor rests. *(Pre-Chorus)*

*My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord. My soul magnifies the Lord.
He has done great things for me, great things for me.*

Unto you a child is born, unto us a Son is giv'n.
Let every heart prepare His throne in every nation under Heav'n. *(Pre-Chorus) {Refrain}*

(Bridge) Of His government there will be no end.
He'll establish it with His righteousness and He shall reign on David's throne.
And His name shall be from this day on, Wonderful, Counselor, Everlasting Father *(repeat)*²

Reader

Joyce Pool

The vision of joy offered in Isaiah is one in which all things of heaven and nature, plant,
animal, human, are set free in the Reign of God.

Old Testament Lesson *Isaiah 35:1-10 (Common English Bible)*

The desert and the dry land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus.
They will burst into bloom, and rejoice with joy and singing.
They will receive the glory of Lebanon, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the LORD's glory, the splendor of our God.
Strengthen the weak hands, and support the unsteady knees.
Say to those who are panicking: "Be strong! Don't fear!
Here's your God, coming with vengeance; with divine retribution God will come to save you."
Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be cleared.

Then the lame will leap like the deer, and the tongue of the speechless will sing.
Waters will spring up in the desert, and streams in the wilderness.
The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.
The jackals' habitat, a pasture; grass will become reeds and rushes.
A highway will be there. It will be called The Holy Way.
The unclean won't travel on it, but it will be for those walking on that way.
Even fools won't get lost on it; no lion will be there, and no predator will go up on it.
None of these will be there; only the redeemed will walk on it.
The LORD's ransomed ones will return and enter Zion with singing, with everlasting joy
upon their heads.
Happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and groaning will flee away.

Reader

In our next scripture, we see that Joy doesn't wait for struggle to be over. Mary "rejoices" in the iconic scripture passage during her pregnancy, a state of affairs that would have put her in a position of dishonor among her people. Instead, she sings out powerfully because she knows that this turn of events will usher in the presence of justice for the oppressed and freedom for the captive. Please stand as you are able for the reading of the Gospel.

*Gospel Lesson

Luke 1:46b-55

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Brothers and Sisters

This is the Word of God for the People of God.

§ Thanks be to God

Sermon

Heaven and Nature Sing: Unabashed Joy

Rev. Vicky Starnes

Song of Response

STAND IN YOUR LOVE

When darkness tries to roll over my bones, when sorrow comes to steal the joy I own.
When brokenness and pain is all I know, I won't be shaken, no, I won't be shaken.

*My fear doesn't stand a chance when I stand in Your love.
My fear doesn't stand a chance, when I stand in Your love.
My fear doesn't stand a chance, when I stand in Your love.*

Shame no longer has a place to hide. I am not a captive to the lies.

I'm not afraid to leave my past behind. I won't be shaken, no, I won't be shaken! {Refrain}

There's power that can break off every chain. There's power that can empty out a grave.
There's resurrection power that can save, there's power in Your name, power in Your name.

{Repeat section}

My fear doesn't stand a chance, when I stand in Your love.

My fear doesn't stand a chance, when I stand in Your love.

My fear doesn't stand a chance, when I stand in Your love! Oh when, when I'm standing in Your love.

Oh, my fear doesn't stand a chance when I stand in Your love.

My fear doesn't stand a chance when I stand in Your love.

My fear doesn't stand a chance .when I stand in Your love!

Oh, oh, I'm standing in Your love. Oh, oh, standing on the rock.

Oh, I'm standing, standing in Your love. ³

✠ TRANSFORMATION OF OUR LIVES ✠

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Todd

Prayers of the People (written by Fr. Rick Morley)

- L: In the hushed anticipation of your coming, O Lord, kindle in us the desire to remain awake; that we might be ready for your coming, and eager to pray.
O God, in days to come the mountain of your house will be established, and your joy shall reign. We pray for the church (especially...), that you might teach us your ways and that we might walk in your paths. Come Lord Jesus,
- P: and hear our prayer.**
- L: Out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and you, O God, shall judge between the nations. We pray for our nation, and all nations, that your peace would be manifest in every corner of the earth. Come Lord Jesus,
- P: and hear our prayer.**
- L: In your Kingdom, O Lord, wolves lie down with lambs and children play with serpents without fear. We pray for the sick, the suffering, and those in distress of any kind (especially...); that you would heal all injuries, comfort all grief, and settle all wrongs. Come Lord Jesus,
- P: and hear our prayer.**
- L: In your Kingdom, O Lord, even the wilderness and dry land are glad and rejoice. We pray for those who rejoice this week as they celebrate their birthday (especially... and anniversaries...); that they might obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing might flee away. Come Lord Jesus,
- P: and hear our prayer.**

L: In the fullness of time, O God, you sent your son, to be born of our sister Mary.
And his name was Emmanuel: God With Us. We thank you for your Presence with us,
and we pray that you might be always present with those whom we love but see no
longer. Come Lord Jesus,

P: and hear our prayer.

L: Come among us O God, and hear our prayers; so that when your Son Jesus comes among
us with great might, and in manger mild, we might recognize his face and his voice,
and come to adore him.

P: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Sung Responsively

FWS 2278

Invitation to Offering

Please sign the blue Connections Pad and pass it down the row.

Vicky

*Offerings are given through cash and check, on-line giving, Texting at 302-488-0038
and by using our Giving Kiosk in the main lobby. There are Giving Cards in the pews to place in the plate, if you wish
Bless your heart for supporting our ministries!*

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

I heard the bells on Christmas day, their old familiar carols play.
And mild and sweet their songs repeat of peace on earth, good will to men.

*And the bells are ringing, "Peace on earth!" Like a choir they're singing, "Peace on earth!"
In my heart I hear them, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men.*

And in despair I bowed my head. "There is no peace on earth," I said.
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

*But the bells are ringing, "Peace on earth!" Like a choir they're singing, "Peace on earth!"
Does anybody hear them? "Peace on earth, goodwill to men.*

Then rang the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep."
[Peace on earth, peace on earth.]

The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, goodwill to men!"

Then ringing, singing on its way, the world revolved from night to day.
A voice, a chime, a chance sublime of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

*And the bells, they're ringing, "Peace on earth!" Like a choir they're singing, "Peace on earth!"
And with our hearts we'll hear them, "Peace, peace on earth, goodwill to men.*

*Do you hear the bells, they're ringing, "Peace on earth!" Like the angels singing! "Peace on earth!"
Open up your hearts and hear them, "Peace, peace on earth, goodwill to men.
Peace on earth, peace on earth. Peace on earth, goodwill to men." 4*

☞ COMPASSION FOR THE WORLD ☞

Connecting to Joy can compel us to want this connection for all beings. We leave this place “with passion” (com-passion) for adding our love, peace, hope, and joy to the world.

Benediction: And so, my friends, may you be blessed with an Unabashed Joy that reverberates deep in your soul. And may you recognize and celebrate that strength wherever you encounter it as you look at the world, as you move through the world, all the while bringing joy to the world. And may you sing along with all heaven and earth!

Benediction Song *We're Gonna Bring Joy to the World*

Joy! Hope! Peace! Love!

We're gonna bring joy to the world, hope to the world.

Peace to the world, and love for everyone!

God's Joy in our hearts! God's Hope in our hearts!

God's Peace in our hearts! God's love... God's Son in our hearts!

THE GOSPEL

A restless generation, we're turning over ev'ry stone,
hoping to find salvation in a world that's left us cold.
Can we get back to the altar, back to the arms of our first love?
There's only one way to the Father, and He's calling out to us.

*To the captive it looks like freedom, to the orphan it feels like home.
To the skeptic it might sound crazy to believe in a God who loves.
In a world where our hearts are breaking, and we're lost in the mess we've made,
like a blinding light in the dead of night, it's the Gospel, the Gospel that makes a way.
It's the Gospel that makes a way.*

It's the cure for our condition, it's the Good News for us all.
It's greater than religion, it's the power of the cross.
So, can we get back to the altar, back to the arms of our first love?
There's only one way to the Father, and He's calling out to us. {Chorus}

It's the Gospel that makes a way.

In my own life it means forgiveness when I know I deserve the fall.
It called me out of my darkness and carried me to the cross.
In a moment my eyes were opened, in that moment my heart was changed.
Like a blinding light in the dead of night, it's the Gospel. {Chorus}

TAG: *It's the Gospel that makes a way. Oh, oh, it's the Gospel that makes a way.
It's the Gospel, the Gospel that makes a way.*⁵

**Please stand as you are able; § congregational response.*

Bulletins for the month of December are sponsored in honor of Denny's birthday, 12/14, and granddaughter, Sarah's birthday, 12/16, by Laurel St. Germain.

Chancel Flowers are given to the glory of God and:

- ❖ In loving memory of Rose Barcellona by Kathy Biedermann & Loretta Mahan;
- ❖ In memory of John Helsel by Allen Helsel.

Stephen Ministers wearing blue name badges will be at each service if anyone in the Epworth family wants to talk about any life challenges.

Our Advent liturgy and special music comes from the Marcia McFee 2019 Advent Series.

The special Peace Candle on the Chancel shines to remind us of God's desire for peace throughout our world and our call to be God's peacemakers.

DVD and Broadcast Ministries: All Church Service at Epworth are presented using multimedia technology. The screens above the Chancel area are used for text, videos, photographs and live cameras. Each service is digitally recorded for archive purposes as well as for distribution to our homebound members on DVD. These recordings may also be broadcast or archived on our web page. Therefore; you may, at any time, be seen and recorded on camera - anywhere throughout the Sanctuary.

Assisting with today's Service

- Acolyte Bianca Camiolo
- Sight & Sound Sharon Wert, Josh Megee, Arne Jerfsten, Karen Kaufman, Sofia Tamburello
- Ushers Head Usher: Jim Blakeslee
Usher Coordinator - Worship Pathway:
9:30: Bob & Marilyn Smith, Mark & Ginny Harbold, James Floyd, Annette Predeaux

Worship Resources

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¹ Give This Christmas Away: Matthew West & Sam Mizell ©2009 Simple Tense Songs

² My Soul Magnifies the Lord: Chris Tomlin and Daniel Carson ©2009 Worshiptogether.com Songs

³ Stand In Your Love: Ethan Hulse, Josh Baldwin, Mark Harris, Rita Springer ©2018 EGH Music Publishing

⁴ I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; Mark Hall & Dale Oliver ©2008 My Refuge Music

⁵ The Gospel: Bryan Fowler, Toby McKeenan & Ryan Stevenson ©2017 Musical Moodswing

Ministers: The Church Family... Lay Leader: Gwen Osborne

Senior Pastor: Rev. Vicky Starnes ... Associate Pastor: Rev. Todd Shultz

Director of Music Ministries: Doug Yetter ... Choir Accompanist: Linda Hess ... Coordinator of Caring Ministries: Mickie McManamon

Manager of Facilities & Technologies: Kenneth Mahan ... Office Manager: Darlene Ford ... ASL Interpreter: Sandy Davis

Special Projects: Debbie Hunt ... Administrative Assistant: Diana Young ... Sound Tech: Josh Megee

Preschool Director: Betsy Plowman ... Nursery: Cathy Crawford ... Cemetery Superintendent: Jay Stevenson

Custodian: Wanda Hudson ... Maintenance: Mike Harrigan...Lead Interpreter: Sandy Davis



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American Sign Language
at 9:15 Service



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www.RMNetwork.org

worship@epworth
7:45 & 11:15 - Traditional 9:15 - Contemporary