

JOY

Advent means coming or arrival. This is a season of remembering the first coming and longing for the second coming of Jesus. The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. **Candles** symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. The **four outer candles** represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ. The **center candle** is called the Christ's Candle and is not lit until it's actually Christmas. The candle we light today is pink because pink symbolizes joy.

We share our joy through blessing others like Elizabeth - Luke 1:42-45

We can have a childlike joy like unborn John the Baptist - Luke 1:44

- Luke 2:8-11
- John 15:9-11; 16:22

We express our joy through worship and prayer like Mary - Luke 1:46-55

- She exalts God because He is mighty and holy.
- She rejoices because God sees her and favors her.
- She worships because He cares for those in need.
- She rejoices because God keeps His promises.

Response: The joy of the Lord is our strength. Our longing for joy is fulfilled only in Jesus.

How to Choose Joy:

- Share: During the Christmas season, invite each family member or group of friends to share one thing that they're trusting God to handle.
- Encourage: Write a note to someone who is experiencing fear and worry. Let them know you're praying that God will give them the courage they need.
- Evaluate: Make an inventory of the things that bring you joy.
- Express: Make the time and space to share a meal and a fun experience. This is such a busy season! Don't miss the joy of sharing the experience of Christmas with each other.
- Pray: Pray the words of Mary in Luke 1:46-55

Digging Deeper:

Some additional thoughts on Joy and gladness in Luke 1

Luke 1:14 - *"It will be to you Joy and Gladness and many will rejoice. . ."*

χαρά, (chara)- might be more about feeling joy or "the experience of gladness"

ἀγαλλίασις (agalliasis)- seems to be about speaking out or acting out in joy, or exulting "a piercing exclamation, exultation" (it seems to have a more intense nuance than joy, or more outspoken)

So in Luke 1:14 it may imply "He will be a joy to you, even an occasion for speaking out in exultation" which is ironic because Zechariah is struck mute until the birth, upon which he speaks out in praise and exultation (1:64). At the same time remember that in Jewish contexts there is doubling in poetry and parallelism of terms. Say it once and then say it again. This might be a familiar Hebraism of "joy and gladness" or "rejoice and be glad" (Matt 5:12; Luke 1:14; John 8:56; 1 Pet 1:8; 4:13; Rev 19:7) or Ps 126:2 in LXX "our mouth is filled with joy and our tongue with gladness" or Ps 96:12 "the fields rejoice and the trees sing/exult" or Hab 3:18.

Luke 1:44 - *"The baby in my womb leaped for joy"*

A physical response of *leaping* implies an intensification of joy, which is likely why the term *agalliasis* is used.

This word is also in verb form in 1:47 (ἀγαλλιάω; *agalliao*) "my spirit rejoices/exalts in God my Savior"

The fulfillment of 1:14 for Luke happens in 1:57-64

1:57 "When Elizabeth gives birth, her neighbors and relatives "rejoice with her" (συνέχαιρον; [συγχαίρω]) which fulfills what the angel spoke to Zechariah (1:14 "many will rejoice")

1:64 When Zechariah is able to speak, "And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God." (1:64) which fulfills what the Angel spoke (1:14 "he will be a joy, and gladness/exultation")

Next Steps:

1. Attend the Longest Night service this Thursday, December 21 at 7:00 pm in the Chapel to process through the difficult life situations and emotions felt during this season. Recognize that joy can be present even now. Learn more at calvarylife.org/longestnight
2. Do at least one thing from the Response list on the front of the page.
3. Invite someone to one of our Christmas Eve services on Sunday, December 24 at 10:00 am, 5:00 pm or 11:00 pm. Learn more about Christmas at Calvary at calvarylife.org/christmas

LifeGroup Discussion:

1. In what ways have you experienced joy even when the circumstances were negative, or even terrible? How do you think joy is different than happiness?
2. How can we grow as people who immediately bless others as a response to our joy in Christ like Elizabeth?
3. Have you ever looked to the traditions of Christmas for joy instead of Jesus? How did that go? Have you been disappointed by that? How can we avoid that each year?
4. Speak blessings to each other in your group as a way to practice the example of Elizabeth.