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# Steadfast Love

## Victory Life Church — Advent 2019

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Sunday, December 15, 2019 — Good News of Great Joy

We celebrate Advent because we are living with different hopes than the unbelieving culture around us.

*Hope*: a proper perspective of the future that creates a positive attitude in the present

Our proper perspective of the future is return of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who will set the world right at His return<sup>1</sup>. This hope gets nurtured in this season by remembering God's steadfast love and faithfulness in the past, the first advent of Christ, in which all of the ancient promises were fulfilled in Him. And if God was faithful to his word out of steadfast love in the first advent, He will remain faithful to the end at His future second advent. This hope is a bold proclamation that present reality is not ultimate reality. This hope tethers our lives to God's future, not to our present circumstances and feelings.

We also examined last week how we want the world and ourselves to be at *peace*. Peace does not just mean the absence of conflict, it also points to something better being in its place. The Old Testament word in Hebrew for peace is "shalom" and in the New Testament, the Greek word is "eirene." Shalom refers to something that is complex with a lot of pieces that is in a state of completeness and wholeness. Life is complex, full of moving parts, relationships, and situations, and when any of these are out of alignment or missing, shalom breaks down. Life is no longer whole; it needs to be restored.

Jesus is described as the "Prince of Peace," the one through whom God's shalom would come into the world through, but specifically under His rule. When Jesus returns, His kingdom will establish the peace ("shalom", "eirene") that never ends. But with that perspective of the future, we can have a posture of peace in the present. Jesus takes the broken pieces of our lives and puts them back together as we trust in Him.<sup>2</sup> As Jesus keeps healing and restoring us, He is moving all of us toward His future where He reconciles all things to Himself.

*Peace*: the posture of the one who is trusting Jesus completely.

### Understanding Joy

*Joy*: the attitude of the one who is trusting Jesus completely.

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 2:11-13

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 1:20

Joy is grounded in God's character, not our emotions or circumstances.

**Psalms 100:1-5 (ESV)** Make a **joyful** noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with **gladness**! Come into his presence with **singing**! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with **thanksgiving**, and his courts with **praise**! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his **steadfast love** endures forever, and his **faithfulness** to all generations.

Joy is nurtured by remembering and anticipating.

**Psalm 126:1-6 (NLT)** When the Lord brought back his exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream! We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, "What amazing things the Lord has done for them." Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us! **What joy!** Restore our fortunes, Lord, as streams renew the desert. Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

**Psalm 126:1-3 (MSG)** *It seemed like a dream, too good to be true, when God returned Zion's exiles. We laughed, we sang, we couldn't believe our good fortune. We were the talk of the nations— "God was wonderful to them!"*

Joy is nurtured by remembering God's faithfulness.

**Psalm 126:3 (MSG)** *God was wonderful to us; **we are one happy people.***

**Psalm 126:4-6 (MSG)** *And now, God, do it again— bring rains to our drought-stricken lives So those who planted their crops in despair will shout hurrahs at the harvest, So those who went off with heavy hearts will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.*

Joy nurtured by anticipation is like cutting ditches for water/grace to flow.

All pain, all suffering, all disappointment is seed: sow it in God and He will one day bring a crop of joy.

### Good News of Great Joy

**Isaiah 52:7-8 (ESV)** How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings **good news**, who publishes **peace**, who brings **good news of happiness**, who publishes **salvation**, who says to Zion, "**Your God reigns.**" The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for **joy**; for eye to eye they see **the return of the Lord to Zion.**

Christian joy is present in the midst of pain and suffering, *loneliness and misfortune*, because God is present and in charge!

Joy is not ignorance or naivety, but a confident assurance in the character and presence of God.

**Luke 2:6-11 (ESV)** And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy** that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a **Savior**, who is **Christ** the Lord."

## Conclusion

*Joy*: the attitude of the one who is trusting Jesus completely.

**Romans 15:13 (ESV)** 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.

What it means to be a follower of Jesus in celebrating His first advent, is celebrating God being present in the midst of a broken and rebellious world, as we look to the future second advent, where His shalom comes to completion. With an eye toward that future, we live in the present with hope and peace and joy, trusting God in the midst of life's challenges and circumstances, because He is the one who brings completeness and wholeness to our lives. This enables us to live with an attitude of joy, despite the pain and suffering in our lives and in our world, because our joy is grounded in God's character and presence.