

Third Sunday of Advent — Sunday, December 17, 2017

(Note: The pink candle is always lit on the third Sunday of Advent and traditionally means "joy." If your wreath has a pink candle, light this as the third candle this week.)

1st Reader: This is the third Sunday in Advent. Today we light two purple candles and the pink candle. The first Sunday, we lit the candle of peace. On the second Sunday, we lit the candle of love. Today, we light the candle of joy. One thing that sometimes happens as we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth is we expect to be happy all the time. Joy is not the same as happy. Joy is a deeper feeling created by knowing that God cares for us. Joy is remembering that God sent Jesus so we would always know of God's care. During Advent, we pray that we may remember again God's gift of Jesus to the world and know the joy that gift brings to all people.

(Light the first, second, and third candles.)

All: *Sing or read together "Joy to the World," The United Methodist Hymnal, 246.*

2nd Reader: When we look at the third candle, we remember God's promise of joy. God promised to send a Savior to the people. Today, we read from the Gospel of John. In the Scripture, we read that John was sent by God not to be the light, but to testify to the light. This reminds us that Jesus brings light to the world. And where there is light, there is joy and peace and assurance. When the world seems dark, scary, and frightening, we are reminded that Jesus brings light, and that brings joy.

1st Reader: Think about a time or a situation when things were dark. This could mean things were literally dark – in the middle of the night when a noise scares us, for instance. Or it could be we felt darkness, such as times when we are frightened and feel alone and hopeless. Now remember how it feels to have light – either physically experiencing light that breaks apart the darkness or feeling comforted and joyful because our feelings of darkness have ended. How would you describe those feelings? Is joy a word that you would use at this time?

Who in our world need God's joy? All of his children do. Jesus Christ is our hope for joy in our world.

2nd Reader: The book John, chapter 1, verses 6-9

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Will you pray with me? Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the joy remembering Jesus' birth brings to us today. Help us live in such a way that our words and our actions help others know of the joy you give. Amen.