



Joy – There's Nothing Better



(Reflections from the sermon on December 13, 2015)

"You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasure of living with you forever."

Psalm 16:11 NLT

When I try to imagine the wonderful things in this life that bring me joy they are categorically personal and deeply intimate. The thrill of success in a few things brings some joy, but my life's fulfillment comes from the love of the people in my life.

I felt joy in my childhood being confident of the protection and provision that came from my loving parents and the companionship of a sister. I was overcome with joy to know that someone outside of my family could love me and wanted to spend the rest of her life with me – thanks Ellie! I was overjoyed at the delivery of all our children and grandchildren; both birth and adoption. My joy was deepened when my family made confessions of faith in Jesus as the Lord of their lives (all nine children and five of our 15 grandchildren). I feel the satisfaction of what joy can bring when right choices are made and lives are lived in accordance to the will of God throughout my family and even my church family.

The joy that fills our heart is God's design. Jesus said, "I have told you these things [about remaining in My love by being obedient to My commands] so that you will be filled with My joy. Yes! Your joy will overflow" (**John 15:11**).

Joy from the One who authored life is the ultimate sense of wholeness; all things coming together giving a sense that life could not get any better. Don't be fooled by the slogans you read and have heard that say *"it doesn't get any better than this"*. Those are cheap imitations with limitations! The joy of the Lord is the real deal by the Original and most faithful promise giver.

The greatest joy from the Lord is the fulfillment of His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. **Matthew 1:22-23** says, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel – which means, *God with us.*'" This special gift was for all the people of the world (**John 3:16**) as One who "will bring great joy for all the people" (**Luke 2:10**).

The Strength of Hope – Advent 2

Jesus fulfilled that joy in our lives by saving us all from our *lost* spiritual condition. Each of us is like sheep that have strayed away, all going our own, separate directions – away from Him. He has provided the guidance and care as the Good Shepherd. As Jesus told the crowd the story about the shepherd with 100 sheep and one strayed off. He pleaded to the sensibilities of the culture to describe how a good shepherd would leave the 99 sheep together while he searched for the one that was lost. “And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders.” The joy of the Savior brings joy to the saved!

It truly doesn't get any better than that!