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Joy in the Anticipation

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Joy in the Anticipation

Abstract

"Are we even aware of our need for a Savior? Of our gratitude for deliverance? Could our material comforts and security be actually diminishing our joy?"

Posting about Advent joy from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/joy-in-the-anticipation/>

Keywords

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Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

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 [all in allthings.org /joy-in-the-anticipation/](http://allthings.org/joy-in-the-anticipation/)

John Baas

December 11,
2016

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 146:5-10](#)

[Isaiah 35:1-10](#)

[Matthew 11:2-11](#)

[Romans 1:1-7](#)

“Well,” said Pooh, “what I like best,” and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn’t know what it was called. A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh

When our family sits at the table this third Sunday of Advent, we will sing this verse of Natalie Sleeth’s “Light One Candle”:

*Light one candle for joy,
One bright candle for joy,
Every nation will find salvation
In Bethlehem’s baby boy.
He brings joy to every heart,
He comes. He comes.*

It may be easy for us to sing about joy. We are healthy, our home is strong, our community is safe, we are blessed with plenty.

But every nation? Every heart? The refugee fleeing the civil war in Syria or drug violence and poverty in Central America? The Haitian family picking up the pieces of their hurricane-destroyed home, wondering where they will find their next meal? The mother of the latest victim of inner-city gang killings? The student despairing as she watches her parents’ marriage disintegrate? The cancer patient enduring yet another round of chemotherapy?

Today’s text suggests yes. Perhaps especially yes. Listen again to what the psalmist says of the Lord God:

*He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.
He sets the prisoner free. Gives sight to the blind, and lifts up those who are bowed down.
He watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and widow.*

This, not material abundance, is why the psalmist will “sing praise to my God as long as I live” (vs 2).

The season of Advent is a season of waiting, of anticipation. We wait in hope. We long for peace. And this week, we anticipate joy. Not only do we anticipate joy, but *we experience joy in the anticipation.*

The Heidelberg Catechism opens by telling us that our only comfort is that we “belong, body and soul, to our faithful savior Jesus Christ.” Many of us have been able to recite this question and answer by heart since childhood. But the second question is equally important: “What must you know to enjoy this comfort?” “First, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am delivered from my sin and misery and third, how I am to be thankful to God for this deliverance.”

Does living with plenty dull the sense of our own sin and misery? Are we even aware of our need for a Savior? Of

our gratitude for deliverance? Could our material comforts and security be actually diminishing our joy? I know that is sometimes true for me.

So whatever your situation, whether you are in a miserable state today, or you are experiencing the dull emptiness of the things of this earth that cannot satisfy, take heart and rejoice. If you know your misery, you are one step closer to enjoying your only comfort. The good news of Advent is that we are in that “moment just before” (though unlike Eating Honey, what follows will be unfathomably better).

Let us put all our hope in the Lord, who reigns forever. He brings joy to every heart. He comes! He comes!