

# The Light of Joy.

Isaiah 9:3

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Introduction.

- C.S. Lewis book and quote.
- “Joy is the serious business of heaven” By Lewis (Letters to Malcolm).

## 1. Joy in the Most Unusual Places (vv. 1–2)

- Zebulun and Naphtali—the first to fall—become the first to see God’s light.
- Christmas tie-in: Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee, the unexpected place of hope.

## 2. Joy in the Most Unusual Circumstances (v. 3)

- Harvest and victory joy appear amid fear, oppression, and darkness.
- Christmas tie-in: Jesus is born in political chaos, poverty, and uncertainty—yet joy shines.

## 3. Joy in the Most Expected Place (vv. 4–7)

- All hope finds fulfillment in the Messiah: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.
- Christmas tie-in: The Savior is the source of joy Israel longed for, now revealed.

**Conclusion.**

- Advent poem.

The third Sunday of advent we light the candle of joy. This is my favourite light in particular. Joy is something that is on top of my list - the day that I'm feeling sad, that is a hard day for me.

As you have seen in the light of hope (first Sunday of advent) and the light of peace (second Sunday of advent), everyone does long for those beatitudes in their lives. It is not different with joy, humans long for joy.

Some people erroneously think that God is so strict, that God is the enemy of joy. Some people erroneously think that heaven is dull, only the angels singing and nothing else is happening – a so called “boring” place. That's far from the truth!

“Joy is the serious business of heaven” (C.S. Lewis, on Letters to Malcolm). According to Lewis, joy is not a distraction from seriousness — it is the seriousness of heaven, because it reflects the fullness of God's presence and love. Lewis depicts God as a joyful God, and Christianity as a joyful religion.

Sermon:

Today's advent verse has a lot to teach us about joy, let us see:

“You have enlarged the nation and increased their **joy**; they **rejoice** before you as people **rejoice** at the harvest, as warriors **rejoice** when dividing the plunder.”

(Isaiah 9:3)

*Note that the word Joy and synonyms are repeated 4 times in this short verse.*

### **1. Joy in the most unexpected place.**

Here is a quote I agree with, “comparison is the thief of joy.”

My generation, whether they notice or not, is playing (and losing) the whole game of comparison – and they are losing their joy because of that!

Let me explain:

You save some money and go on a summer day to the CN Tower, you have fun, eat a good meal, family is happy, the whole experience is safe and sound. Once you get at home, you look at your phone and you see your best friend's picture in Paris. Now the whole game of comparison comes at you, because your joyful day just got crushed because your best friend is having a better time than you.

You may think that I am exaggerating, but that's happening right now to many of us.

Isaiah chapter 9 has something to teach our generation – there is joy in the most unexpected place.

VV. 1-2 of Isaiah, God is promising light and glory (joy!) to the land of Zebulun and Naftali, the region of Galilee. A place that there was contempt before, later will receive light.

During the times of Isaiah, that whole area was destroyed by the Assyrians and Babylonians, but in the future, once Christ comes, they would receive light. Which indeed happened; Jesus Christ purposefully spent the majority of his ministry serving the northern land of Israel – Galilee.

God is teaching us a lesson here, whether CN Tower or Paris, whether Galilee or Ontario, there is light, glory, joy available for you, because of Christ.

Joy can be found in the most unexpected place.

## **2. Joy in the most unexpected circumstance.**

There is another thief of joy worth mentioning: unrealistic expectations.

Back in the days, it was expected from a man to have a job, marry and have kids, build the family with honour, pay the bills, retire by the age of 65, and that's it. Nowadays, that is no longer the expectation. The expectation is now that you have a second home, investments, your pension fully funded, you own your own business, and you retire at the age of 50 to travel the world. That's what is called "success" by the media.

Once people see other people in a "better" circumstances than them, their joy may be affected. Thankfully, Isaiah has some encouraging words for us:

V. 3 – pay close attention to the words "multiplied the nation," "joy in the harvest," and "rejoice in the spoils." God is promising prosperity in population, in economy, and in the foreign relations respectively.

It is interesting that when God is speaking these words, the land of Israel is actually suffering the opposite: the population was shrinking, the economy was crashing, and their army were defeated due to the constant attacks of the Syrians and Assyrians (and later the Babylonians).

Yet, 700 years later, Jesus comes to earth in the land of Israel, in such a harsh circumstance of oppression, poverty, and the threat of annihilation – and wherever he goes, light, glory, and joy comes with him. God has promised joy in the most unexpected circumstances.

God is teaching us a lesson here: whether we are growing or shrinking, whether the economy is doing well or not, whether we are on the “victorious” side” or the “loser’s side”; there is light, glory, and joy available to us, because of Christ.

Joy can be found in the most unexpected circumstances.

### **3. Joy in the most expected place.**

Now Isaiah flips script: he will talk about the joy we find in the correct place – Jesus. (vv 4-7) Isaiah takes your eyes off the circumstances, off the places, and he shifts to the throne.

The statements: “a child was born,” “a son was given,” “wonderful counselor,” “mighty God,” “everlasting father,” “prince of peace” ... Isaiah teaches us that joy is found in Jesus. That’s the reason this Advent verse, verse 3, is loaded with joy. When the people of Israel looked at their past kings they saw disaster, but they can look at the future and know messiah will come. Messiah will bring joy to them.

During the days of Jesus, he brought joy to Israel. Many received it, but many rejected it. Here I need to have a friendly word of caution: God promised joy in the harvest (food) and joy in the spoil (victory) and joy in righteousness/justice (spiritual) – the people who wanted joy just for their stomach (food and victory) did not accept Jesus as the Lord; the people who accept the message of the Gospel and righteousness, received Jesus and his joy.

It is important that we understand Matthew 6:33 “seek first the Kingdom and all will be added.” Matthew 5:3 “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” God’s joy cannot be divorced from righteousness, and ultimately, God’s joy cannot be divorced from Jesus Christ himself. We live in a day and age that people seek Jesus for what he can give, instead of who he is. That shouldn’t be – he deserves better than that.

### **Conclusion.**

Advent reminds us that joy doesn’t wait for perfect places, perfect circumstances, or perfect people.

God sent light to Galilee—the forgotten north. God multiplied joy in the middle of fear and chaos. And God fulfilled joy in the one place we can always count on—the coming of His Son. Even in Jesus’ time, people looked for joy in the wrong places: in bread to satisfy hunger, in a military victory to overthrow oppressors. But almost no one wanted joy in the form of justice, mercy, and God’s transforming love.

This is the Advent message for us today: Joy is not found in what we control. Joy is found in what God has done, is doing, and will do through His Son. Joy comes to the

places we don't expect, in the circumstances we don't choose, through the Savior we can always trust.