

Gospel-Centered Advent Reading Week 3: The Joy Candle

Can you imagine the joy Adam and Eve must have felt to walk with God in the garden of Eden? They knew and experienced their Creator face to face. We can also imagine the despair they experienced when they were cast out of Eden for sinning against God. Yet in his mercy God began to restore the joy of knowing and experiencing him through a man he named Abraham and his descendants Israel.

God often leads people into trial so that we can learn to find joy in our relationship with him. He led the Israelites into captivity in Egypt for 400 years of hardship and toil. God did not forget them. He raised up Moses to lead his people out of captivity but the evil king Pharaoh would have none of it. To free his people God sent plagues on the Egypt, even killing Pharaoh's firstborn son, a child the people believed to be divine. As God led the Israelites out of captivity he parted the Red Sea so they could walk across on dry land. Pharaoh chased after them and God crashed the waves down upon Pharaoh's armies. As Moses and the Israelites stood on the far side of the Red Sea Moses' sister Miriam sang a joyful song of thanksgiving for the deliverance God had brought.

Exodus 15:21 (NIV)

“Sing to the Lord,
for he is highly exalted.
Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea.”

Just like God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt God planned to deliver his people from the even greater bondage of sin. By the power of the Holy Spirit the virgin Mary conceived a child. When she visited her relative Elizabeth who was also pregnant Elizabeth's child leaped in her womb for joy. Jesus, the second Moses, has come to lead his people into freedom. As Mary carried the Christ child she like Miriam at the Red Sea sang a joyful song of thanksgiving.

Luke 1:46b-48a (NIV)

“My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.

Now as we light the candle of joy we joyfully thank the LORD for sending Jesus, the one and only divine Son of God, to lead us out of our sin and captivity. Just as Moses was born and placed in a papyrus basket as a baby, Jesus was placed in a wooden manger. Just as Moses lead the Israelites out of captivity, Jesus leads any who repent and believe in him out of captivity to sin and into the freedom of eternal life. Let us sing songs of joyful praise like Miriam and Mary this Christmas season as we also celebrate the arrival of the one who will lead us home into God's presence, a second final exodus.

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Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote this gospel-centered advent reading to tell the big-story story of the Bible. Please feel free to use it in your church to share the gospel. Find more advent readings at CornerstoneWestford.com.