

Joy Defined

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December is that time of year when we're inundated with the message of 'joy to the world'.

This weekend I sat in a small New England church, listening to a message about joy. In the midst of the message, I had a personal epiphany.

The speaker reminded me first that the joy of the the Lord can change the atmosphere of my sphere of influence. This is a solid, comforting thought. Who doesn't want to see their home, their relationships, their work, their neighborhood infused with the bright light of joy?

As the speaker continued on, I realized that I didn't truly understand the nature, the definition of joy. Jesus promises that we will be 'full of joy' (Jn 16:23 MSG).

Full of *what*, I asked?

I'm not saying I'm right. But this what I heard as I meditated on the meaning of joy:

Joy is the result of understanding what Jesus has revealed, approaching each moment with our focus on Jesus, all requests and actions being filtered through what we understand Jesus' truth to be. Joy is not happiness. Joy is complete understanding and acceptance of Jesus' will for my life: to become like him.

Complete and full joy is the result of a clear understanding of Jesus' truth.

I think that when Jesus says that no one will be able to steal our joy, when we read verses like Nehemiah that tell us: "...the joy of the Lord is your strength..." (Neh 8:10), we wonder how God can expect us to be happy all the time. We wonder what we're doing wrong when we don't feel 'joyful'.

I think sometimes we confuse joy and happiness.

To clarify, I believe that joy is not a 'feeling'. Joy is a choice.

Joy is delving into the very nature of Jesus. Reading, studying and meditating on his life.

"When I see you again, you'll be full of joy, and it will be a joy no one can rob from you. You'll no longer be so full of questions." ~Jesus in John 16:23 MSG

The joy Jesus speaks of is the unshakable understanding and acceptance that we were created solely to be in relationship with God himself.

Jesus' coming to earth provides us with the missing link needed to experience that relationship with God.

'Joy to the world, the Lord has come.'

Joy is in our midst, manifest in the opening of our heart-eyes to the revelation of our deepest purpose – to become like Jesus and be in relationship with God.

My prayer for you this advent season is that you will experience true joy – the depth of belief and clarity of God's true purpose for your life.

Blessed Advent,
Rosalyn