

Finding Joy in the Season of Advent

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God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good. My name is John Kinuthia, and very delighted and excited to bring you this talk today about finding joy in the season of Advent. Let's invite our Mother Mary to walk with us as you listen and as I give this talk.

Hail Mary

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Prepare Well to Celebrate Jesus' Coming

Welcome. In a culture where the secular world begins celebrating Christmas or putting up decoration as early as September, and they start preparing people to buy, buy, buy, buy, buy stuff for Christmas. You and I are called to be still. You and I are called to slow down, to think about really the deep meaning of Christmas and prepare well to receive Christ in our hearts, to prepare well to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, in a heart that is really directed towards God; a heart that is clean, a heart that is really ready to receive Jesus Christ.

And in my household this Christmas, we are also getting ready for the birth of our fifth child. We are so excited. So this Christmas in our household will be, you know, celebrating the birth of Jesus and celebrating the birth of our fifth child, which is very exciting. So how can you and I prepare well? How can you and I have a holy waiting, a holy anticipation to the birth of Jesus Christ?

Luke 2:8-11

Well, as we know from the scriptures that the birth of Jesus was announced to the shepherds when they were busy tending flock in the mountains, busy hanging out with their flocks. The angel appeared to them. The angel was full of joy. And how did this happen? Listen to the scriptures. But the angel said to them, ***"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord."*** That's Luke 2:8-11.

So that scripture, you can see the angel, you can picture the angel being delighted to deliver this great news. And the scripture says that this will cause joy, great joy to all the nations, to all the people. So for you and me, as we prepare for this joyful occasion through the Advent season, I think there's a couple of things that we can do in order to journey with Mary, in order to be with Mary to joyfully prepare the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and Savior.

Jesus is the Cause of Our Joy

There's a great quote I like from Saint Pope John Paul II that says, *"God made us for joy. God is joy, and the joy of living, the joy of living reflects the original joy that God felt in creating us."* Think about that for a second. That you and I, when we are being created, God felt this immense joy, this great joy. And so when we're living joyfully, then it'll reflect that true joy that God had. And the birth of Jesus Christ, as we prepare and as we await, He is the joy. He's the cause of our joy. He's the joy. So a lot of joy words here today. Joy, joy to the world. So, and therefore in this culture, when, you know, the secular world prepares for secular Christmas, they do their own preparation.

You and I are called to prepare our hearts. You and I are called to reflect. You and I are called to take some quiet time every day in the Advent season to think deeply, to give thanks to God, to prepare our hearts to love in a profound way. So that when Jesus comes in our heart, He finds a place where He can dwell, where He can do wonders and miracles, right?

So what does that mean and why is it important to prepare well? Obviously, we don't want to be caught off guard, right? We don't want the birth of Jesus to happen, and we are not ready for Him, right? We want to be ready. We want to show Him that we have prepared ourselves well for Him. Right?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation for Christmas

The sacrament of reconciliation. What is it in your life that you want to empty yourself off? What is it in your life that over the course of the entire year, you have said, "You know what? I need to go for confession for that." "You know what? I need to take care of that." Have you? Have you been able to do that? Because the sweeping of our hearts of all those things that are not of God, the things that will not help us prepare and we're just born, we don't have this joy, we need to sweep those out, right? So that when He comes, He finds a place He can fill us with joy.

Here's another way of saying this. We need to empty ourselves of those things that are not of God, so that He can fill us with the things of God. Right? We don't want to just empty ourselves and not pray and not hope and not ask our Lord to fill us.

So this season of preparation, this season of waiting and holy anticipation calls for you and I to reflect, calls you and I to take some time off to go to the mountains, to go to be alone, to... I actually like writing things down when I'm preparing for Christmas. What are those things that have not given me joy this year? What are those things that have stopped me from being the one God is calling me to be the best version of what Jesus has designed me to be? What are those things? Write them down. What has stopped me from loving others the way God has commanded me to love? What has stopped me from serving others the way God has made me or has made me to serve? Because those things are the ones that we need to take to the confession. Those things are the ones that we need to go when you go to adoration and say, "Jesus, as I prepare for your coming again, here are the things, here is my list of those things that I'm struggling with."

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In a world where we have a big great deal of anxiety, depression, a great deal of fear, how can we prepare well? How can we... really make sure that those things are not stopping us from having a joyful experience of Christmas this year? How can we make sure that the finances, the stress from work, the stress of family life, the, you know, those things that our relationships that are not on the way to adjourn for Christmas time?

Seek God Always

Here are a couple of things that I think can help us in this preparation. Number one, always, always seeking to be filled. Always seeking God to fill us. Always. Well, I'm going through a rough time. Turn to God. Well, my relationship are not the best. Turn to God because that's where it begins: turning to God, seeking Him, and asking Him to fill us. The second one is being aware of God's love and God's presence. We are preparing to receive Jesus, but guess what? Right now, right here, God is here. God is present. Noticing those moments where God is present and God is with you regardless of what's going on, because God is really with you.

Noticing those moments that God is speaking to you through a friend, through a scripture, through even a post you see on social media. Noticing those moments that God is really speaking to you. Because when you notice those moments, you now start to identify, "Oh, thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord. You're with me. You're helping me." Right?

Being aware of how and acknowledge, not only being aware but acknowledging those moments, acknowledging the people that are speaking to you, are helping you, acknowledging your family, acknowledging your friends, because it is through those moments that your heart warms up, your heart is filled, your heart is filled with gratitude and with joy, because obviously joy is not something that is out there. Joy needs to be cultivated from inside out. Joy, obviously different from happiness, you know? Secular world want me to be happy. High-fiving each other and singing Kumbaya. That's what the world wants.

Seeking True Joy

But for you and I are called to cultivate that interior joy. The joy that stems from humility like Mary, the joy that comes from sobbing, the joy that comes from loving. And what is the best way to prepare for this, right, is to seek God every day, to look at Him in the adoration or in the crucifix, in the way we love those people who are around us, in the way we serve, reflecting on what are the moments in this year that I have really felt the presence of God, being aware of that presence, reflecting on what are those things that have stopped you and me, stopped us from really having a great, joyful experiences with Christ.

So as we know, when you're searching, when you're searching for joy, it's actually you're searching for God. When you're searching for joy, happiness, you find it in all the things that we get, but really joy, the true joy, can only be found in Christ.

My grandfather. My grandfather, and I know if you have listened to my other talk, probably heard me say this, said that with Christ, we are filled up. With Jesus Christ, we are filled up. Without Christ, we are nothing. Without Christ, we are like a dry river. We have nothing.

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Nothing can grow in us and nothing can, We cannot give anything to anyone. But with Jesus Christ, we are filled. With Jesus Christ, we are full and we are able to spread the love. We are able to spread the gifts of God with others.

And this Advent season, as we walk with Mary and as we walk with her to visit Elizabeth and towards giving birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, I think we can ask the Lord to fill us with that joy, to fill us with the heart of service, the heart of gratitude, so that we're going to be well prepared. I don't think there's any other better way of preparing ourselves other than asking God to help us prepare. Right? Reading the scriptures, praying together, and asking, "God, please help me prepare well. Help me prepare so that when Jesus comes in our hearts, He already finds me prepared."

And let's face it, the TV, the social media, when you go to shopping, there's a lot of noise that comes from all those things, right? Buy, buy, buy. That can take your heart away from a true preparation.

Quotes To Help You Prepare for Jesus

A couple of quotes that I found very, very helpful and can also help you as you prepare is number one, come from St. Teresa of Calcutta that says, "At Christmas when Christ comes, will he find a warm heart?" Will He find a warm heart? And what does that mean? "Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving others with God's own love and concern." Again, we want to prepare well. Help me, God, to prepare well. Help me to love those around me. Help me to serve them with your love and your concern. You know, let me go out my way to serve the needy, to serve the poor, to serve those around me. When I'm serving my family, let me not complain. You know, it might sound like a small thing, but not complaining and instead being grateful that you're able to serve is a great deal.

That instead of looking at things saying, well, we have to buy all these toys for the kids, or we have to send all these Christmas cards, or whatever it is, do it for God. See, because God has given me this opportunity to serve, because God has given me the opportunity to buy the toys for my kids, I do it for Him for the greater glory of His name. Right? And allow your heart to be warmed up. Identify those moments where God is saying, "I am here to warm your heart," where God is saying, "Don't worry about, Don't worry. Don't complain, but let me fill your heart."

The other quote I thought was very good was St. Paul VI, "No one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord. The great joy announced by the angels on Christmas night is truly for all people." Right? "The people who are anxiously waiting for the savior and for the numberless people made up for all those who, in time to come, would receive its message and strive to live by it." So this message of Christ, the birth of Christ announced by the angel, is not just a one-time message.

It's a continuous message to be lived by you and I, by continually seeking God, preparing ourselves, being aware of those moments of joy that God has communicated to us, being aware of those things that stop us from loving God and serving others the way He wants us to do, being aware of those moments where we would rather complain, but we choose not to complain, right?

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Instead, we choose to be for gratitude, realizing that every struggle that we are going through in life, to just went through, realizing that every struggle and every suffering that we can take to Him in adoration, in confession, so that we can really be truly prepared to receive Him during Christmas. Joy is an infallible sign of God's presence in our lives. Right? And because it's God's presence, it's meant to be shared, right? That doesn't mean that when things are going crazy externally, we cannot still experience joy in our hearts. We can. And the only way, my friend, is only to ask God to fill us with that joy. The only way is to ask God for the gift of joy. Allow Him. Now, this other thing, it's one thing to ask for the gift, and it's another thing to allow Him to give you the gift and you'll receive the gift.

Because we could always pray and ask for the gift, but then our hands or our hearts are closed. You cannot receive it. But we need to be open. We need to open our hearts and our hands to say, "Lord Jesus, fill me with that gift of joy. Fill me with the gift of service. Fill me with the gift of love so that I can do those things that you're asking me to do as I prepare myself to receive you the way you want me to do that, right?"

Inspiration Quotes From the Magnificat

If you are joyful, do not worry about. Let me paraphrase. If you're filled with God and you're joyful, do not worry about so many things that are externally happening. Because those things, sometimes they can rob you the joy. They can rob you from being in the presence of God. And I know this too, because many times during mass or during adoration, I'll start wondering. My mind will start wondering and worrying about what is going on in the world, what's going on at work, what's going on at home? And all of a sudden, the joy, all of a sudden, I can experience these moments where I'm not focusing on God anymore. Instead, I feel nothing. And instead focusing on God and allowing Him to fill me, that joy will come out, that infallible presence of God will show up, not only when my fist is closed, not when my heart is closed, but when my heart is really open.

So, I also thought that I will share some of the things that inspire me from The Magnificat. *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord."* And I think this is a prayer, this is a song that we can always sing, especially once we are preparing for the coming of Jesus. This is something we should, We need this every day. Save this prayer with Mary every day. It's Luke 1:46-55. This is it. This can help you really be ready. *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant."*

So good, right? As you're doing dishes, as you are serving other people, this can be the song that is resonating in your heart. *"From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. He has mercy on those who fear Him. In every generation, He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and He has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and His children forever."*

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This, I think, my friend, this captures the heart of Advent preparation. This captures what we have been trying to say and what we have been trying to do to help you prepare. There's joy, there's gratitude, there's openness to God's will, there is promises, there's fulfillment. And if there's one thing I would leave you with as you seek God's face, as you seek to please God, and as you seek to prepare, one thing I would leave you with is The Magnificat, the prayer of Mary.

I would challenge you and inspire you to pray this every day. With all the things that I've said, this captures the heart of Advent. My friend, God bless you. God bless you so much and go pray The Magnificat. And let's end with a Hail Mary.

Closing Prayer

And in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen. All glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was a beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Amen.