

## Crossroads Community Church

Sunday December 14th, 2014

Although the foggy weather made it difficult to see, we came to worship the Lord with Joy! Today is the 3rd week of Advent where we lit the candle of Joy. Pastor Don shared announcements, prayer needs and prayed, "Dear Father God we praise you for the many gifts you have bestowed upon us, none greater than your Son Jesus Christ, help us remain focused on you so we will all experience great Joy as we prepare for Christmas, In Jesus Name Amen."

Well Christmas is just around the corner, are we ready? This season carries many preparations from planning a meal to shopping lists, from gift wrapping to writing cards, from decorating to baking; it can send us in a tailspin if we lose sight of who Christmas is truly about. Preparing for the season ought to begin in the heart, which is why we observe the Advent. The first week we lit the candle of Hope, the second was the candle of Peace and today is the candle of Joy. I am sure many of us may feel Advent is repetitious over the years but it is still necessary and good to be reminded of truths, as Peter writes, "Therefore, I will always remind you about these things even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live," 2 Peter 1:12:13.

You see amidst all the hustle and bustle of Christmas we can so easily get distracted about the important reason for the season and end up losing our sense of Joy. Jesus is the reason we celebrate, we remember what He has done for us from the day He came as a Baby to the day He was sacrificed. He came to bring us Joy, to be our Savior and give us eternal life, (Luke 2:8-11).

We sing many carols about the Joy of the Lord like "Joy to the World", however for some people Christmas is not such a joy filled occasion, some are stressed out, and joyed out. Pain, trials, the loss of someone or loss of work can cause people to doubt that Christmas is about Joy and people adopt a Grinch attitude. Here are 6 ways to keep the "GRINCH" out of Christmas. G is for Give all your worries to God, he will give you peace. When we are worried we can't be joyful and Jesus tells us not to worry, (Matthew 6:31-34). Turning to God when we worry should become second nature just like rising to our feet and removing our hats when we hear "Oh Canada", (1 Peter 5:7, Philippians 4:4-6).

R is Refuse to focus on what we don't have, when we are discontent it is usually because we compare ourselves with what others have, this is not an attitude promoting gratitude and it will certainly rob our joy and can even make us ill, or green with envy, maybe that is why the Grinch is green, (Proverbs 14:30). The secret to joy is contentment, (Philippians 4:11).

I is for Include time to rest, when we overwhelm ourselves with countless do to lists and run around trying to do too much in the least amount of time it is exhausting and we can become weary and lose our joy, (Job 9:25). God made the Sabbath a command, so we can rest and refocus on Him, how much more during this season when it is all about Him? (Exodus 20:8). Sometimes we overburden ourselves because we commit to do too much that we think is important. Sometimes we need to say "No" and ask God what is it he wants us to do, hence the reason we need to set time apart to rest and have a little talk with Jesus.

N is Never forget the Reason, the Messiah's Birth, it is when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came into the World to forgive us and save us from the penalty of our sins, (John 3:16-17). Jesus was born to a virgin and laid in a manger, He grew to be a man and then He sacrificed His life for ours so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life. So at Christmas what better way to honor Him than to love and forgive one another? This ought to bring great joy to us all! The Birth of Jesus is the source of all Joy!

C is for Consider your future but before we can do that we need H for Holding our thoughts captive, as in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. How can we apply this during Christmas? Well by avoiding temptations, asking Jesus to protect us from unhealthy thoughts and desires such as overspending on credit or overindulging in foods and drink. When these thoughts occur we ought to admit them to the Lord and ask for His strength to resist and replace them with good thoughts like who to help out or what charity to give to, or what Christmas service to get involved in, or just put some worship music on, these are all excellent and worthy of praise, (Philippians 4:8).

Beloved let us Consider our future, it may be true that life is full of unpredictable things and not always pleasant or easy but when we know our future is secure with Jesus it gives us Hope, Peace and Joy. We know our suffering is temporary and is nothing compared to the glory Jesus will reveal to us later, (Romans 8:18, 12:12). When we keep our thoughts and prayers on Jesus this Christmas He will give us His unending joy. As Peter once wrote when our faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. We love him even though we have never seen him. Though we do not see him now, we trust him; and we rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible Joy. Asherey Shalom!  
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