

Devotional for Advent Week 3

From “Bless the Advent We Actually Have” by Kate Bowler & the Everything Happens Project.
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Mysterious Joy

What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born from above.” The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.



—JOHN 3:6-8 (NRSV)

Because I have found that joy is not something I can force or “choose,” I try to imagine ways *to run into* this great gift. Circumstances or plans or people who might make joy possible. Like throwing ridiculous birthday parties. When Zach, the tiny human in my home, turned 9 last year, I threw a ridiculous farm-animal themed party. There were goats, bunnies, and adult farmer drinks. The kids ran around like they were one with the animals, and even my dad (who hates anything outdoors) was having a good time. As I looked around, I caught eyes with Zach. Delirious with joy, he ran up to me and asked, “Is this the day that I’m born again?” And, of course, I had to excuse myself into the farm bathroom and have a solid cry because the joy in my heart was overflowing.

Being born again is the promise that Christ brings to us. Joy is jumbled up in our response to that new life and the presence of its Giver. It might not be as easy as looking in the mirror and telling yourself: “I will be joyful today.” But you can make plans to cross paths with joy. You can plan a simple gathering with the people you love. You can go outside and play in the snow (if you have snow), or go spotting for the best Christmas lights. Maybe you need to plan a ridiculous birthday party, and if it isn’t your birthday, you can throw one for Jesus. Make a plan to cross paths with something big or small that helps you run into joy, and there you may find new life sprouting within you. When you find that joy, be reminded of the promise of Christ that allows us to be born again.

REFLECT

1. Can you remember a time when you were delirious with joy? Or when you witnessed someone full of joy?
2. How did that joy cause you to see or feel new life? To be born again?
3. What plan can you make today to cross paths with joy? What prayer can you pray, asking for new life and joy for this season?

BLESSING for this lovely day (p. 46)

*Blessed are we who desire to feel our hearts soar
with the glory set in the heavens,
the moon and the stars,
with awe at the people right in front of us,
with the beauty of the lily in its elegant purity,
and the matter and power of the tiniest seed,
bursting to life as it was always destined to do.*

From *For the Lives We Actually Have*

LISTEN

Feels like Joy by Micah Tyler- a toe tapping, happy making song about joy.

<https://youtu.be/yeVBCFfZXW4?si=dQ0ZoLUddGe9JeY1>

WORSHIP www.heywardst.church or You Tube Heyward St. Church

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