

## Advent Week 3 – The Candle of Joy

### Healing Beside the Horse – The Meadow of Joy

#### Word of God

##### **Isaiah 61:1-4**

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.  
They shall build up the ancient ruins;  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

#### Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.  
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then they said among the nations,  
“The Lord has done great things for them.”  
The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are glad.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,  
like streams in the Negeb!  
Those who sow in tears  
shall reap with shouts of joy!  
He who goes out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16–24**

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.  
Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.  
Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

### **John 1:6–8, 19–28**

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.  
He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”  
He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”  
And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”  
So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”  
He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”  
Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”  
John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not

know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

### **Reflection in the Field**

The air of Advent's third week carries a softer warmth—the promise of dawn against the cold.

Horses sense it too. In the first light of morning, before the stable stirs, they lift their heads toward the horizon as though they already know joy is coming.

Joy, like faith, is not noise—it is presence. It blooms quietly in those who trust that God's light cannot be overcome.

Isaiah's words speak of restoration. John the Baptist points beyond himself to the Light. And in that same spirit, joy rises not from comfort but from Christ. The horse reminds us of this truth: to stand in the morning light after a long night is to live the gospel of joy.

Advent joy is steady and gentle—born not of things going well but of knowing that Christ is near. In the meadow of joy, faith becomes a living hallelujah that needs no words.

### **Lutheran Reflection**

Martin Luther wrote:

"The heart overflows with joy and gladness when it believes that God has no wrath but only love toward us in Christ. That is the true joy of the Gospel."

— Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians 5:22, Luther's Works, Vol. 27 (1535)

For Luther, joy was not a temporary feeling but a fruit of faith. It is the heart's response to grace—the song of a soul set free. In times of darkness and doubt, this joy becomes a witness that Christ's light still shines.

Like the horse resting in the morning pasture, we learn to stand quietly in the light of His love, content to be held in peace.

## Reflection Prompts

What does “joy in the Lord” mean to you when life feels difficult or quiet?

How does your horse (or the horses you work with) express trust or contentment that reflects joy?

In what ways can you share Christ’s light and joy with others this Advent?

## Closing Prayer

Lord of Joy,

You fill the morning with light and our hearts with song.

Teach us to rejoice not because all is well, but because You are with us.

Let our lives shine with gentle gladness, that others may see Your love reflected in our peace.

Amen.

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

— Numbers 6:24–26 (ESV)