

# CHRISTIAN LIFE NOTES

Oregon District LWML

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## Joy – in Lent??

How can we talk about joy in the penitential season of Lent? Lent is about self-examination, repentance, and spiritual discipline. What do those have to do with joy?

Lent begins with remembering Jesus being led (Matthew 4:1) or driven (Mark 1:13) into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. When did that happen? Immediately after His baptism. We can only imagine how miserable that temptation experience must have been. Where's the joy in that?

As Lent progresses, the Sunday readings lead us through Jesus' battles. The weight of human ignorance and sin and grief falls heavier and heavier on Jesus as He teaches, preaches about the kingdom of God, and when his friends were grief stricken by the consequence of sin (John 11), Jesus wept. The battle between Satan and God is heating up all the way to Jesus' agony and bloody death on the cross. Where's the joy in that?

Dictionary.com says joy is "the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying; a source or cause of keen pleasure or delight; something or someone greatly valued or appreciated." Combine that definition with the definition discovered by C.S. Lewis explained in "Surprised by Joy". Lewis describes how he came to realize that "Joy was a desire." He discovered that "All the value [of Joy] lay in that of which Joy was the desiring", which leads us to the question: What is the object of the desire that is our joy? Our answer is the desire, the "something exceptionally good or satisfying, the source or cause of keen pleasure or delight" that David expressed in Psalm 27:4:

*One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.*

Aha! That's what the battle of Lent is leading to. That's the joy, the object of our desire: To

dwell in the presence of God – exceptionally good and satisfying, causing great delight and keen pleasure, greatly valued and appreciated.

We Christians today have the advantage of knowing what lies at the end of the Lenten journey, or rather what is waiting for us beyond the end of the journey. Jesus' journey and ours through temptations, battles, and death will be rewarded with life forever in the beauty of His presence.

**Our faith will be rewarded!  
Joy!**



*But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:10-11). The Spirit of life Paul speaks of is the same Spirit who plants the fruit of joy in our hearts. He gives us faith to believe in Jesus and plants us in a congregation of believers to give us strength and encouragement for the journey. He gives us His Word where we learn of and from all who have gone before us toward the object of this joyous desiring. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-3).*

That's the JOY of Lent!

Prayer: Thank You, Holy Spirit, for living in my heart and giving me the strength to persevere through the trials and temptations not only of Lent, but through all my life, as I press on to the JOY beyond the journey. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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