



**Welcome to Unity's Interactive
Worship Service**
Fourth Sunday of Advent Topic:
The Bridge to Joy
Power Point notes available at:
www.unityofbakersfield.org

The Bridge to Joy



Jesus said, "I have told you many things so that my joy may be in you and your joy complete. So this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you." –John 15:11-12

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It has been said that "joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day." –Henri JM Nouwen

"The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives. --Russel M Nelson

And Wess Stafford offers this insight, "Joy is a decision, a really brave one, about how you are going to respond to life."

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Joy is a decision, a choice, that we make each and every day of our lives. And yet, few people are able to maintain it for more than a day. It seems that they allow life and all of its drama to make the choices for them, to see the world through the eyes of stress, worry, disappointment, hate, discourse, and unforgiveness. Each of us may have felt these things ourselves. And yet we all have the ability to generate joy by taking the bridge to joy. And the bridge, as Jesus taught, is love.

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There have been numerous books written on the subject of joy and happiness. So what does joy mean to you?

For me, joy is a perfect lubricant. It lightens all burdens. It counteracts sorrow and does away with depression.

As the Daily Word shared today, "Joy is a divinely inspired attitude I take with me, into every experience of my life."

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Joy is our innate gift from God that is linked to the divine love we were created with. Therefore, our joy is not dependent on what occurred ten years ago, a month ago, yesterday, or last night.

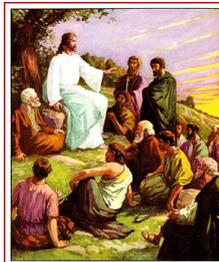
I like what Danielle Laporte had to say about joy in her blog, "Joy is the fiber of your Soul. It's the stuff of your essence. And since you, your Soul, can never be annihilated, your access to joy never vanishes."

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Because joy is so foundational to your true being, every other state or emotion can rest on top of joy, it can accommodate everything. And why is that? Because joy is an attitude of mind! Case in point: The day I discovered the bridge to joy by experiencing God's love at my first Unity service.

May Rowland, First Director of Silent Unity, tells us in her book, The Magic of the Word, "It is our attitude toward life that brings us joy in living."

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Jesus clearly understood how an attitude of mind can block your joy. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." –Matthew 6:24

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"No one can serve two masters." To whom are you allowing your thoughts to be centered on? The Lord of your being or a past hurt, situation or grievance about someone or something?

When you hold resentment toward someone or something, you are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that blocks the bridge to joy. Only love and forgiveness can raise the gate of negativity so you can pass.

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There's a story I'd like to share with you:

Two Buddhist monks on their way to the monastery were enjoying a beautiful walk and admiring the beauty of God's creation. As they approached the river bank they found a beautiful woman who, like them, wished to cross the river, but the water was too high for her. So one of the monks lifted her on his back and carried her across. The fellow monk was thoroughly appalled.

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How could he have done this? He knows our laws our rules, the fellow monk thought. For two full hours he berated him on his negligence in keeping the holy rule: Had he forgotten that he was a monk? How dare he touch a woman and more, by actually carrying her across the river? And what would people say? Had he not brought their holy religion into disgrace? And so on and so forth.

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The offending monk patiently listen to the never ending sermon, while continuing to find joy in nature's surrounding beauty. Finally, he broke in with, "Brother, I dropped the woman at the edge of the river. Why are you still carrying her?"

This reminds me of the saying, "Would you rather be right, or would you rather be happy?" Who of us have not held a rule, or law, or doctrine as a reason to shut the gate to the bridge of joy?

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Someone once told me that true joy is being able to make the choices each day that will allow you to love the life you have while creating the life of your dreams. To look out each day upon the world and see it with joy in ones heart regardless of appearances.

That's not to say that there isn't pain, suffering, war, hate, and turmoil in the lives of people. The people of Jesus' day dealt with all that too. We just don't add to it, or give it power over us.

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So what is that kind of joy that Jesus talked about giving us? What lesson can be get from his teachings? Here are some thoughts:

1. Like love, the true feeling of joy is a great harmonizer and healer.
2. True joy keeps a person lifted in consciousness to seeing beauty and goodness, in spite of whatever is going on around them.
3. True joy arises out of ones contact with the divine spirit within themselves.

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4. True joy bolsters the soul and strengthens the mind body connection one has with the Lord of their being.

5. True joy radiates from the center of ones being, shinning the light of love into the dark corners of world. As Jesus stated, "Let your light shine!"

6. True joy, love and light are part of your divine nature and comes from trusting God. And in so doing, gives you a sense of all-rightness about your life.

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Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls.

Mother Teresa

An affirmation for joy:

Praise God for the assurance that everything in my life is all right. I am lifted to new heights on wings of joy, and my heart sings as I radiate that joy to everyone I meet.