

# sermon study guide

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Sermon Title: Divine Interruptions – Contagious Joy

## IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What is one divine interruption that you have experienced in life? What was something positive that came from it?
2. Who is somebody you know that reflects joy in trials? How is this joy expressed?

## UP - PURSUE GOD

*Read Luke 1:26-56*

3. What challenges would Mary be forced to face with her 'divine interruption'? From Mary's song (vv. 46-55), how does she respond with joy in her circumstances?

*Read Galatians 5:22-23, Nehemiah 8:10, James 1:2-3, Psalm 118:24 (ESV)*

4. From these Scriptures, what is God's role and what is our role in growing joy in our lives, despite circumstances? How important is being in community?

## OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. What is the most toxic joy-stealer in your life? What is the antidote?
6. How am I going to be 'infectious' and pass on the joy of the Lord during this season, whether it be through forgiveness, trust, gratitude or generosity?

### **For Personal Reflection/Prayer:**

Create a 'Joy' card with this quote: "Our joy is based on who God is, what He's done in our lives and the expectancy of what God will do in the future." Add Galatians 5:22-23 and post it up somewhere in your home where you will see it.

### *THE WORD (NIV)*

#### **Luke 1:26-56**

#### **Galatians 5:22-23**

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

#### **Nehemiah 8:10**

10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

#### **James 1:2-3**

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

#### **Psalm 118:24 (ESV)**

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

# sermon study summary

## **Divine Interruption: Contagious Joy**

**December 12/13, 2020**

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Advent is the joyful anticipation of Christ's coming, despite the current circumstances. God's people waited with joyful expectation for what He would do through the promised Savior. Advent's call is to live a life of joy based on who God is, what He has done and what He will do in the future.

Life is filled with divine interruptions: whether it be job loss, illness, the death of a loved one, Covid, or an unexpected pregnancy. In James 1:2-3, we are reminded that joy is possible in all trials. Joy is not merely a feeling of happiness due to circumstances but it is rooted in God (Nehemiah 8:10) and thus grows in us through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Mary experienced a divine interruption when as recorded in Luke 1, she was visited by an angel and then told that as a virgin, she was going to give birth to a Son. The angel promised that this was possible because the Spirit of God was going to come upon her and that nothing is impossible with God. With the news of this divine interruption, Mary immediately took the several days journey to visit her older cousin Elizabeth, whom the angel said was pregnant despite her old age. When Mary arrived, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped and she was filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaiming to Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" (Luke 1:42). This pronouncement from Elizabeth would have served as an affirmation to Mary of the angel's proclamation. Mary responds joyfully with "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1:46-47) even though the difficulties of her circumstances remained the same: She was pregnant, not married and thus in a situation to endure community scorn, shame and possible death. This pregnancy could ruin her life. Mary's response proves that the path to joy is not avoiding sorrow, pain, loss, or uncertainty. Joy comes from the indwelling of God's Spirit which flows out of our relationship with Him.

Joy is not something we can manufacture but a result of the Spirit dwelling in us. When we acknowledge that Jesus' death and resurrection is payment for our sins and express a genuine desire to grow in relationship with Him, the Spirit indwells us.

We have the ability to create a fertile growing environment for joy. Worry, fear, and focusing on losses, disappointments and things we don't have are toxic to joy. Joy grows in an environment of practicing repentance, gratitude, and generosity with the gifts that God has given. Divine interruptions can cause many kinds of struggles and are not easy. But joy practiced in community can be contagious: whether it is to reach out for needed encouragement as Mary did or provide nurture as Elizabeth did.

Joy is something that the indwelling Spirit develops in us. It is also a choice to create an environment where joy grows, strengthens, and overflows. Living this way gives glory to God as we joyfully consider what God has done, what He is presently doing and what He will do.