

Preacher, Chris Ayers

What's Your Orientation?

John 15:11

Psalm 118:24

Romans 15:12-13

Let's play "Name That Christmas Carol."

1. Bleached Yule-----(White Christmas)
2. Castaneous-colored Seed Vesicated in a Conflagration---- (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)
3. Singular Yearning for the Twin Anterior Incisors-----  
(All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth)
4. Righteous Darkness----- (O Holy Night)
5. Query Regarding Identity of Descendant----- (What Child is This?)
6. Give Attention to the Melodious Celestial Beings----- (Hark! The Herald Angels Sing)

Ah, the joy of Christmas word games.

As you know, Kit Peck, Mrs. Joy incarnated herself, has inspired us Wedgewoodians to focus on joy during Advent, not on one Sunday of Advent, but on all the Sundays of Advent. So much for peace, hope and love. Hey, it's not like we won't get to those sooner or later. Actually, and I'm being serious, this focus on joy has brought me a boatload of joy. And when I'm joyful that makes God joyful. The same applies to you. When you are joyful that fills God joy plate like a plate being filled up at an all you can eat buffet. You might call it, busting out the seams joy.

Jesus, according to John's gospel, said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11) The Psalmist instructs "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoy-or rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24) And the Apostle Paul chimes in with this, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:12-13).

So what's your orientation? Is it one of joy?

Generally speaking, I think we find what we look for. If we look for joy, we'll find some. This is not to say we won't find heartache and suffering and depression too, but-----but if we look for joy, if we set our orientation to joy, we'll find joy, generally speaking.

On our refrigerator we have a quote by Irving Becker. "If you don't like someone, the way he holds his spoon will make you furious; if you do like him, he can turn his plate over into your lap and you won't mind."

We find what we look for.

Anita Baker, eight-time Grammy Award-winning, multi-Platinum rhythm and blues and soul singer and songwriter, who by the way sang in a Baptist choir at the age of 12, has a song titled “You Bring Me Joy.” Can you sing that song?

I know, I know, there are some people. Yes, some people who drive us crazy.

I saw a sign in a office this week which read, Everyone brings us joy. Some when they enter the office, some when they leave the office.

O.K., some people, but on the whole, nine times out of ten, generally speaking, What’s your orientation? Do you primarily look for the faults of others, their shortcomings, or do you look at who they are and what they do and how they act and see reasons for joy?

If you want to be a joyful person, learn to enjoy other people.

And do this, find things to do that you enjoy. Find a few things or find a multitude of joy activities, but make sure, make darn sure your life is saturated with joyful activity, joyful hobbies, joyful fun.

The good news is-----if you go by current book titles---the good news is you have a lot of joyful activities from which to choose.

Joy of cooking

Joy of sex

Joy of gardening

Joy of coffee

Joy of scrapbooking

Joy of cooking Christmas cookies

The Joy of Physics

The Joy of Simple Living

The Joy of Listening to Sermons (Just kidding. I made that up. It’s not a book title yet. Maybe I should write that book.)

The joy of home wine making

The Joy of Burnout: How the End of the World Can Be a New Beginning

The Joy of Breeding Your Own Show Dog

The Joy of Vocabulary

The Joy of Laziness

The Joy of Weight Loss

The Joy of Origami

Joy of Flower Arrangement

The joy of card making

The joy of juicing

The joy of reflexology

The joy of knitting

The joy of art

The joy of Russian piano music

The joy of Japanese cooking  
 The joys of Yiddish  
 The joy of handweaving  
 The joy of fundraising (You've got to be kidding.)  
 The joy of meditating  
 The joy of watching Carolina beat Duke. (I had to throw that one in.)

Joy. What do you do that brings you joy? Is your life saturated with joy? What might you do to put more joy in your life?

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11) "This is the day the Lord has made; let us re-joy and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24) "May the God of hope fill you with all joy. . ." (Rom. 15:12-13)  
 Or put another way, to quote the lyrics of the song, "I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart to stay. And if the devil doesn't like it he can sit on a----that's right---he can sit on a tack."

Or put another way using the lyrics of a Christmas song:

Jingle bell, jingle bell, jingle bell rock  
 Jingle bells swing---and jingle bells ring  
 Snowing and blowing-----up bushels of fun  
 Now the jingle hop has begun.

Do you need some more jingle bell hop and jingle bell rock in your life?

Being that we were focusing on joy throughout Advent, and being that I was going to have to preach three sermons on joy you can imagine the research on joy I've been doing. I've read way more sermons on joy than I ever cared to read. I've read way more devotions on joy that I ever cared to read. To be frank, there's nothing like Christians to stomp on your joy, to kill your joy. It was all so-----so picky. This is joy. This isn't joy. The joy of giving----umm, to the church. Yeah, you knew that one would be in there. The joy of the Lord. The joy of one's salvation. The joy of serving the Lord. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Maybe.

I thought-----I thought it would be nice to have a sermon on joy that wasn't so religious, more of an incarnation, down to earth, gritty, fleshy, ordinary, just a plain Jane sermon on joy. Yes, the joy of the Lord and yes, the joy of one's salvation, but how about the simple statement that God wants you, wants me, wants the world to have as much joy as possible.

What and who bring you joy?

Listening to Victoria talk about politics and her solving all the world's problems, sharing what she has read in books and magazines, that brings me joy.

Seeing and hearing Vicky interact with her parents---talking to her after she has talked with her mother and gotten all the news in Mitchell County where no news is too small to tell in great detail---seeing her joy from talking to her mother and remaining connected to her roots---why that gives me joy.

Joy. Will imitating his mother gives me great joy. Calling her the beacon of misinformation. Seeing Will make an unbelievable golf shot. Watching him grow up and mature. Will and I ganging up on his mother---pure joy.

I en-joy picking on people. Let's just tell it like it is. In fun. My joy but not at their expense. Well, not too much at their expense. Like Mary Lou Paul, for example. The woman hasn't probably sinned in the last decade but I like to talk about her Bourbon Chocolate Chip cookies which she's never made. She's made Chocolate Chip cookies but she's never put Bourbon in them. Have you?

I've got to be nice to Mary Lou now, though, now that I want that coconut cake. But all these years of cutting up with her. That's a lot of joy.

People who put some pizzazz in life, pizzazz in Christmas, they stir up joy within me. My Dad had an old Red Belly Ford tractor that he parked by the road during the Christmas season and he put a wreath on the front of it.

Folk who wear funny Christmas hats, individuals who put Christmas lights on tractors or put enough lights on their house to light up a city, people who paint the front of a jet to look like there's been a collision with Santa and his reindeer, Homo Sapiens who put antlers on their dog--they decorate my life with joy.

Joy. Birds dancing to Backstreet Boys music. People doing stupid, funny You tube videos. Children jumping for you seeing Christmas lights. Preachers starting an Advent sermon with "Name That Christmas Carol".

And all these joy talks by Wedgewoodians make me feel joyful. Haven't they been wonderful! Amen!

Drew and Jake Bright, and Josh Sigmon, having the time of their lives talking and singing into those microphones during the play last Sunday. Their hamming it up. Not wanting to get off the stage. Pure joy. Amen. Let's give them another hand.

It's always a joy to sample the cookies from the W3, Wonderful Wedgewood Women, cookie sawp. I'm happy to announce that this year's Pastor's Award goes to Patti Cox and Marcia Simmons for their---O.K., I think they need to improve on the name---for their Dog or Kitty Chow. It doesn't sound delicious, but it was. You can pick up an autographed copy of today's sermon printed on paper from the Holy Land immediately after the service.

Joy. You always find, generally speaking, what you look for, whether it's what you look for in people, what you look for in church, what you look for in a marriage, what you look for in a relationship, what you look for in life.

C.S. Lewis wrote that God created us for joy.

Matthew tells us that “when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”

What’s your orientation?

Little bundles of joy, we call infants, but what I’m saying is that little bundles of joy, big bundles of joy surround us if---if we only have eyes that see and ears that hear and hearts that understand and empathize.

Well, I hate to end a sermon on joy on a sad note but I want to share this story with you. Actually, the story is quite sad but also it’s a story about joy too.

In her book *Firstlight*, Sue Monk Kidd, shares a story about when she was working in a hospital as a nurse. Kidd writes: “The hospital was unusually quiet that bleak January evening. I stood in the nurses’ station on the seventh floor and glanced at the clock. It was nine o’clock.

I threw a stethoscope around my neck and headed down the corridor to see a new patient, Mr. Williams. Aman how had come in alone, without any family.

As I entered, he looked up eagerly, but averted his eyes when he saw it was only me. I pressed eh stethoscope over his chest and listened. Strong, slow, even beating. Just what I wanted to hear. There seemed little indication he had suffered a slight heart attack a few hours earlier.

He looked up from his bed. “Nurse, would you. . .” He hesitated, tears filling his eyes.

He brushed away a tear. “Would you call my daughter? Tell her I’ve had a heart attack. I live alone and she is the only family I have.”

His respiration suddenly sped up. I turned his nasal oxygen up to eight liters a minute. “Of course I’ll call her,” Kidd said.

He gripped the sheets, his face tense with urgency. “Will you call her as soon as you can?” He was breathing too fasy.

“I’ll call her first thing,” Kidd commented, patting his shoulder. “Now you get some rest.”

I flipped off the light. He closed his eyes, such young blue eyes in a fifty-something face. The room was dark except for a faint night-light under the sink. Reluctant to leave, I moved through the silence to the window. A foggy mist curled through the parking lot. Above, snow clouds, quilted the night sky. I shivered.”

“Nurse,” he called, “could you get me a pencil and paper?”

I dug a scrap of yellow paper and a pen from my pocket and set it on the bedside table.

“Thank you,” he said.

I walked back to the nurses' station and sat in a squeaky swivel chair by the phone. Mr. Williams's daughter was listed on his cart as the next of kin. I got her number and dialed. Her soft voice answered.

"This is Sue Kidd, a registered nurse at the hospital. I'm calling about your father. He was admitted tonight was a slight heart attack and----"

"Oh no!" she cried. He's not dying, is he?"

"His condition is stable at the moment."

"You can't let him die!" she said.

"He's getting the very best care."

"My father and I haven't spoken in almost a year. We had an argument on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, over my boyfriend. I left and I haven't been back. The last thing I said to him was, "I hate you."

Her voice cracked and Nurse Kidd heard her crying. She felt tears in her eyes too. A father and daughter, so lost to each other.

"I'm coming. I'll be there in thirty minutes," she said.

Sue Monk tried to busy herself with a stack of charts on the desk, but she couldn't concentrate. She hurried back down the hall to Mr. Williams' room. She opened door. He lay unmoving. There was no pulse.

"Code ninety-nine!" Monk shouted. The alert shot through the hospital within seconds after Monk had called the switchboard through the intercom by the bed. Mr. Williams had had a cardiac arrest.

Nurse Monk leveled the bed and bent over his mouth, breathing air into his lungs. She positioned her hands over his chest and compressed. One, two, three. At fifteen she moved back to his mouth and breathed as deeply as she could. Where was help?

Then Monk thought. Oh, God, his daughter is coming. Don't let it end this way.

The door burst open. A doctor, several nurses and a respiratory therapist poured into the room, pushing emergency equipment. Nurses plunged syringes of medicine into the intravenous tubing.

The heart monitor was connected. Nothing.

"Stand back," cried a doctor. Electrical pads were placed on Mr. Williams' chest. They tried over and over. But there was no response. Mr. Williams was pronounced dead.

A nurse unplugged the oxygen. The gurgling stopped. One by one they left.

Monk stood by his bed stunned. A cold wind rattled the window.

How can I face his daughter?

Monk left the room and saw the daughter talking to a doctor. After he left, she took her hand and led her into the nurse's lounge.

"I'm so sorry."

"I never hated him," she said.

Suddenly she turned toward me. "I want to see him."

I escorted her down the corridor to his room. We stood by his bed a moment and then she buried her face in the sheets.

Monk noticed on the bed the scrap of yellow paper. On it was written:

My dearest Janie,

I forgive you. I pray you will also forgive me. I know that you love me. I love you too.

Daddy

Joy. Do you primarily look for the faults of others, their shortcomings, or do you look at who they are and what they do and how they act and see reasons for joy?

Joy. Don't postpone it. Whatever you do, don't postpone joy. Each and every day experience the joy of others, the joy of life, the joy of who you are, the joy of all that you like to do. Every day!

Jingle bell, jingle bell, jingle bell rock  
Jingle bells swing---and jingle bells ring  
Snowing and blowing----up bushels of fun  
Now the jingle hop has begun.