

Your Hidden Key to True Holiday Joy

I've heard the complaints.

November is for Thanksgiving. December is for Christmas.

Eat the turkey before you set up the tree.

And I've seen the memes on social media.

Two shoppers: "The mall's all decorated for Christmas. You know what that means." "Thanksgiving is coming."

Turkey to Santa: "Wait your turn, Fat Boy!"

Fairy Godmother to Cinderella: "And when the clock strikes midnight, Halloween will end. Then BAM! Christmas carols everywhere."

But as a wise person once said: "The calendar says Thanksgiving comes before Christmas. But in the life of a Christian, Christmas always comes before Thanksgiving!"

Joy means different things to different people. For some, joy is fleeting—dependent on changeable circumstances—or the calendar.

For the Christian, joy is rooted in a relationship with the three-in-one God who created the universe. The One who never changes. It's a response to:

- The Father, who is our joy and delight (Ps. 43:4).
- The Son, who tells us to remain in Him so His joy remains in us (John 15:11).
- The Holy Spirit, whose fruit is joy (Gal. 5:22).

When we understand the grace of God, we live minute by minute in the awareness that through His Son, Jesus, God redeemed us out of the slave market of sin. He reached down to pull us out of the mire of a life enslaved to our own sinful nature. He freed us from the futility of trying harder even as we continually fail to attain the holiness He requires.

The past 11 months have been a reminder of this truth for my hubby and me. It started with a diagnosis that often results in death. After months of treatment, we received a declaration that he is cancer-free. And finally, a prognosis recommending caution for the next several years.

Some might say it's too early to be joyful. After all, we have several years of scans in front of us to watch for the cancer's possible reappearance. But that's like saying Christmas joy should be relegated to a particular month or season.

Joy—Christian joy—rejoices in the present moment as we swim in the ocean of God's grace.

It remembers that all we have has been given to us by a Father who delights in the children redeemed by His Son—the One whose birth we celebrate every Dec. 25th.

True joy trusts that even though circumstances may appear unhappy, we have a heavenly Father who is always at work for our ultimate good.

If we truly understood the grace of God, we would never relegate Christmas joy to a single month. So yes, the calendar may say it's still November, but to quote the apostle Paul from Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"

So, today, I will rejoice by putting up my Christmas tree. It

will join the nativity scene set up a few weeks ago. {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. She also authored *Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional*, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at [.](#)

This article originally appeared at [.](#)