



## Joy

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They always say, “Too much of a good thing...”. Yes, that’s what they say. I don’t know who “they” are, but we hand down this wisdom from generation to generation. I also don’t know how “they” finish the sentence. It seems as if it can be left as a fragment, ominous in its portent. One suggested meaning is that quality is relative to quantity, and the more prevalent the thing, the less enjoyable it becomes. I get that. Right now, I have a lot of hangars. Hangars are good, useful tools, but too many of them clog my closets.

Not everyone would complete the phrase similarly. Mae West and Jerry Garcia described too much of a good thing as being wonderful or just about right. Don’t get me started with the F. Scott Fitzgerald or Mark Twain versions.

As we examine our Advent focus on Joy this week, I’ve reflected where I find joy and whether I can have too much of it. We read this past Sunday in Isaiah 35 about the redemption of Israel and return of the people to Zion, a foretaste of God’s kingdom.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly  
and rejoice with joy and shouting...  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes...  
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (vs. 1, 6b-7, 10)

Abundant water transforms the wilderness...to the point of becoming a swamp. Too much of a good thing? Maybe I’m just in the Advent doldrums, but “everlasting joy” sounds exhausting. Perhaps I’m trying too hard to create the joy of the season. Do we try for the perfect holiday events or traditions to the point of fatigue?

Our Scripture is a reminder that the waters broke forth and pools overtook the burning sand, but not because the Israelites built a dam. The crocus blossomed abundantly without being planted and tended. Are we prepared to wait for everlasting joy that is not of our own making? Rather than crossing more off the Christmas “to do” list, maybe we can set the list aside. Then, I pray, we will see the good things God has brought forth without any effort on our part. Too much of those good things? Not a chance!