

Gretchen Ware

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Today's readings are filled with Joy. In the first reading from Zephania, the prophet tells us to Shout for Joy, Sing Joyfully, Be glad and Exult with all your heart. Fear not, the Lord, your God is in your midst. He will rejoice over you with gladness and renew you in his love.

In Luke's Gospel we hear the familiar story of the Visitation. Mary, pregnant with Jesus, greets Elizabeth and as she does, the sound of her greeting is picked up by baby John, in her womb, and he does a joyful little leap.

Christmas is supposed to be a joyous occasion when we welcome the birth of Jesus. It hasn't always been that way for me. Sure, I have been happy during the Christmas season with family, friends, gifts, parties, – all the external things. But sometimes I felt sad and empty inside. At the time I didn't know why. The day I wrote this, I had heard a hymn at Church that pretty much summed it up, "There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord, for You to reveal Yourself to Us. There is a longing in our hearts for love, we only find in You, Our God."

It wasn't until I began to seek a personal relationship with Jesus that I found the love and joy that only He can provide. Going through the Christlife series, getting involved in Church ministries, spending time with Jesus in prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit, have all helped me to grow in my relationship with Him.

Now, I am filled with joy, not only at Christmas time but throughout the year. It is the peace of knowing that Jesus loves me and will always be with me. It is knowing that God is in control in all details of my life, that gives me the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be all right. My Christmas wish for you this year is that you too will seek out a personal relationship with Jesus and you will be filled with the peace and joy of Christ. If you seek Him, you will find He is already there – within you and me.

