



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

December 14, 2014

Joy to the World

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. —Psalm 16:11

Jack and his brother were playing together one lazy afternoon. A creative young schoolboy, Jack's brother grabbed some decorative moss and glued it to a cookie tin. Adding rocks, sticks, and flowers, he used his budding artistic skill to give his creation the cozy look of a garden or small wooded valley. As children do, they lost themselves in their imaginative world.

Soon Jack was overcome with a sense of wonder and longing. He began to feel an overwhelming desire to enter this tiny world. The longing was so strong it almost ached, but so filled with wonder that he wanted it never to stop. Years later, that moment remained a monument in his memory. He labeled the feeling he experienced "joy" and longed inwardly for it to return.

It did return from time to time, but life has a way of sweeping reverie away. The boys soon lost their beloved mother to cancer. Their father, struggling with his own grief and never good with children, made sporadic, awkward attempts to connect with his boys. Ultimately, they were shipped off to boarding school to fend for themselves.

Jack soon left the faith of his youth. In his mind, the God he grew up with had left him without a mother and far from home. That kind of God could be dispensed with. He turned instead to education, philosophy, and logic to make sense of life. But every now and then, that sense joy would pop in at some unexpected moment. In time, it became the object of his search. He looked for its source in the pages of atheist authors—men with what he considered the right opinion, free from religious superstition. Safe from supernatural intrusion.

But somehow, Jack noticed with disdain, this sense of joy only popped up in stories written by Christians. Wonder returned as he read authors that not only believed in God but insisted on the worship of Jesus Christ. The longing he felt as a child—more satisfying than any fulfillment—always came in connection with Jesus, no matter how hard he tried to push Him away. One day on a bus trip, Jack had no idea how it happened, a change came. On his way to his destination, he did not believe that Jesus Christ was God's Son. On the way back he did.

His given name was Clive Staples Lewis, so we can forgive him taking "Jack" as a nickname. He came to know joy, not as a feeling but a reality. Not in a place but a Person. He came to life when he came to know the Source of Life on a personal basis. Christ filled his life with all the longing and hope, joy and wonder he longed for as a child.

This week, a student of mine described Christmas as a time when we see magic all over the place. He has a point. At Christmas, songs and stories resound with fantasy and enchantment, conjuring images of dreams come true and hope reborn. The excitement of toys for girls and boys, the anticipation of fun on Christmas morning, the impossible feats of Santa on Christmas Eve all reveal a universal longing for something beyond the material reality of day-to-day life. At this time of year, the child within us dreams of magic, longing for something more.

Joy came down at Christmas—joy for all the world. Jesus fulfilled the longing deep in the heart of everyone on earth. The God who spoke the universe into being and breathed His life into the first Man came to reconnect us to the One Source of everything good. The Son of God Himself came down and brought us eternal joy.

Prayer for Northpoint: Amid the busyness and activities of the Christmas season, pray that we as God's people will stop and enter the Lord's presence. Pray for Christ to reign in our hearts, shine in our lives, and echo in our words.

Prayer for the United States: Ask God to send His Holy Spirit on His Church in our land. Pray for a revival among God's people—a revival that is deep and wide and lasts long. Pray that Americans of every race and nationality will surrender to Christ and receive the joy of Christmas.

Prayer for the World: Pray that the Lord will establish His reign over all the earth, by bringing individual hearts to Jesus Christ. He will speak peace to the nations as, one by one, people everywhere bow before Him as Lord.

Prayer Supporting Ministry:

- *Ministry of the Word:* Ask God to fill our hearts with His love this Christmas season, especially love for the lost.
- *Christmas in Corona:* Pray that the Gospel presented to struggling families will take root in their lives and bear fruit for Christ.
- *Winter Camps:* Ask God to be present in power at our camps for children and youth. Pray that His truth will establish Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in young lives.