

Living well through Advent

Week Three

Thursday 15 December 2022

True Simplicity and Joy

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

In his quote, “Comparison is the thief of joy,” Theodore Roosevelt reminds us that comparison has the capacity to steal our joy. If we think about it, comparison also has the power to do the same with simplicity.

Our consumer culture thrives on comparison, and the holidays often pile on an additional layer of struggles with comparison. Its subtle goal is to make us feel in some way inadequate if we don't have the newest version of this or that product/relationship/job. Social media also encourages comparison as people post only the highlight reels of their lives. If we are not careful, we can find ourselves wondering why our imperfect lives don't look as flawless as other lives. We may wonder why everyone else's images of their family seem perfect, while the painful, often messy, challenges within our families are so well-known to us.

When comparison leads to feelings of inadequacy, it can prompt us to do, buy, eat, or drink more to overcome these uneasy feelings. We are wise to remember that doing or buying more is the opposite of simplicity, and that true joy and simplicity are found not in doing or getting more, but often in being content with less.

No comparison is necessary when we focus on true simplicity and joy. A quiet moment alone, with a friend or loved one, in nature, or with God, can be an abundant gift of simplicity and joy in and of itself. There is no need to compare it to any other moment—either our own or someone else's. Giving ourselves permission to take the time we need to create rich moments for ourselves is the best protection we can offer our joy.

Let us reflect on the following questions:

- ◆ What do you think of the idea that comparison can be a thief of both joy and simplicity?
- ◆ Are you caught up in any kind of comparing your life to others during this holiday season?
- ◆ If so, what choices can you make to reclaim a greater sense of true simplicity and joy?

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him. ...