



## THE CANDLE OF JOY

December 13, 2020

Karen Cheung

Several weeks ago, I agreed for our family to participate with the lighting of the Advent candles. I knew we would be speaking on Joy, but didn't give it much thought until a few days later. And it hit me. I'm supposed to talk about JOY!! JOY in the middle of a global pandemic. Our lives have literally turned upside down over the past 9 months. Schools closed. Travel ceased. All of our activities ended. And 9 months later, we have a husband working full time from home, a 2nd and 5th grader remote schooling from our basement and guest room, and a preschooler at home filled with energy, curiosity, and the need for attention most of the day. Like most parents and families, we are hanging onto our sanity by a small thread. JOY!!

I took a step back, I reflected. Maybe there are things that have brought us much Joy over the past 9 months! We've found JOY in seemingly small moments and big moments! I personally found great Joy in April after learning Zoom and virtual Girl Scout meetings. It was my first time trying to lead Girl Scouts through a computer screen. I didn't think they went that well. BUT the girls were smiling, giggling, and asked for more – for most elementary kids those smiles were few and far between in March/April – and they made my heart sing! We found great Joy in spending more time outdoors and discovering local forest preserves. We found great Joy when we finally bought a camper – an item that has been on our wish list for years – but due to busy schedules and my preference to fly over driving, we could never quite justify that purchase! But now with travel options limited and a near empty schedule– now was our time! We had so much fun on our first camping trip and planning our next adventures as a family – JOY! I think most parents, and maybe grandparents too, have experienced much joy at the resiliency of our children – I've watched them tackle remote learning, watched them figure out new ways to play with friends – while being 6 feet apart, watched them play and wear masks in 95 degrees without a care in order to spend precious moments with a friend.

And then two weeks ago while I was still contemplating Joy, my sister-in-law, a MD at University of Wisconsin texted. She had just been told she would likely receive the vaccine within a week of its approval. She typically visits family in Chicago at least once a month. But during this pandemic, we only saw her once for a brief afternoon visit outdoors in Madison. My kids miss her! But the JOY on my kid's faces of the news that we could (hopefully) see her in a non-social-distanced manner in A MONTH! My kids had lots of questions "Can we see her without a mask? Can we be less than 6 feet apart? Can we finally stop giving air hugs?" We don't know those answers just yet. But the JOY at the potential of these reunions is enough!

This is what brings me the most joy right now. The thought of many happy reunions in perhaps a few short months. Joyous reunions between families, between students & teachers, between friends, between pastor and congregation!

JOY!!!