



# Links Players

## Advent Fridays, 2022 - Christmas Joy!

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior....  
(Luke 1: 46-47a, ESV)*

On balance, the game of golf has brought an immense amount of joy in most golfers' lives. No doubt, many have suffered bitter disappointments. But on the whole, it has delivered unexpected levels of joy. Perhaps it was that first hole-in-one. Maybe it was shooting your age.

What feeling do you most associate with Christmas? Even as I write the question, I realize that it is not a simple one because it likely depends on your age and life experience.

As we look at the story of the first Christmas, when Jesus was born, we discover, however, that there is one answer common to everyone regardless of age and life experience – joy.

Mary was the most obvious person who joyfully received the news of the Son of God entering history. Unlike Uncle Zachariah, whose belief was paradoxically hindered by temporary unbelief (who of us hasn't struggled with that experience?), Mary received the news of the coming Son of God with faith and joy. Her joy is most obvious in her praise recorded in Luke 2:46-56, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!"

The least obvious person who joyfully received Immanuel's coming was John the Baptist – while he was still in his mother's womb! Again, it is Luke who tells us that merely hearing the newly pregnant Mary enter the house caused John to leap in his mother's womb "for joy." (Luke 2:41, 44) What a powerful reminder of the wonder of humanity that a baby in his mother's womb can be clearly conscious and aware of the proximity of his God even when that God, taking on human form, is so small that his existence can still be described in terms of how many cells he is.

Finally, there is the joy of the oldest, Anna. Here is one whose husband was taken from her in his youth and lived for decades with the disappointment of dreams unfulfilled – no children, no family, no husband with whom to grow old. As far as the details of Anna's life had gone, her God-given hopes had been dashed by God-ordained circumstances.

And yet, the swelling waves of her sorrow had only served to cast her upon the rock of salvation. And so, she did not depart from worshipping "night and day." Then the day came when she saw the baby Jesus, the one who would turn her mourning into the morning. The dawn had come; her hope fulfilled; her faith made sight; her joy complete. Her joy could not be contained as she spoke: "to all."

Even as I write this, I am praying that all who read it will know the life-giving joy that Jesus brings to all who trust him.

**Prayer: Jesus, fill us with your joy this Christmas! Please give us the needed boldness to share this joy with others.**

### READING - Psalm 51: 1-13

**OPENING QUESTIONS:** Talk among yourselves about that moment(s) in golf that has produced significant joy.

1. Verses 1-12 are prayers David offers to God after his egregious fall into adultery and murder. Discuss the many petitions in this prayer that go into a renewed walk with God.

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2. David ends this section in verse twelve with an appeal for joy. How might each request in the previous eleven verses contribute to his/our joy?

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3. In verse thirteen, we see one significant outcome when God answers these requests for a restored relationship with God. What is that? Why is this important?

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