

“Finding Joy (When It Seems to Have Disappeared)”

by
Andrew Kooman

What Sandy reflects on the past year, a tough one that taught her you can never have enough. Enough toilet paper hidden in the linen closet. Enough batteries to get you out of the darkness. And you certainly can't get enough of God's Spirit to guide you through life's challenges.

Themes: Christmas, Joy, Advent, Home, Dreams, Monologue, Pandemic, COVID-19, Reader's Theatre

Who Actor- male or female mid-50's

When Present

**Wear
(Props)** Candle
Lighter

Why Psalm 36:7-9

How If you are acting the monologue on stage, be imaginative and use the space to re-enact the actor's experience waking in the middle of the night, with burn and dry lips, etc.

If you are reading for Zoom, read it with passion and emotion, and don't be afraid to take your time. Look in at the audience or into the computer camera. Ensure all your notifications are turned off and emails are closed and have the PDF on screen near the camera.

If you read the script from the pulpit, be familiar enough with your lines so that your head isn't down in the script the entire time. Look audience members in the eye. Take time to pause and breathe. Embrace the awe and mystery of the scripture.

Time Approximately 3-4 minutes

Actor enters and addresses the audience.

I had a dream, and when I woke, I felt like I needed one of the great men or women of faith from of old to help me to understand it. In the same way Joseph helped Pharaoh perceive that there would be seven good years of harvest followed by seven years of famine.

But there were no rivers and there were no cows. It was just me, standing there, in the middle of a desert.

My fingers were blistered. My skin was hot from the sun. My lips were cracked and I was thirstier than I can ever remember. I wanted to cry, but it was so dry, I just didn't have any tears.

And then I heard a few words, whispered on the wind. They made the hair stand up on my arms as a cool breeze swept across my body.

I woke up right then because the feeling was so real, so startling.

Sitting up in my bed, I think I understood what it must have been like for Elijah to hear the voice of God on the mountain. After the earthquake and the fire and the wind.

The words stuck with me, like they were written across the wallpaper of the bedroom. The wrapping paper, scissors and tape from a late-night session of gift wrapping were still sitting there on the floor.

What were the words whispered in the dream that so startled me?
"Drink deeply from the river of my delights."

Drink deeply? From where? There was no water in sight!

And just as I found myself wishing that I could make a time machine and travel back to the Egyptian empire as it was about to rise to prominence so that I could track Joseph down in his prison cell to ask him what it might mean, the answer came (*snapping fingers*) just like that!

The same way the wind blew and startled me in my dream. The gentle voice of the Spirit.

The desert is where we're at. Where we've come from. What we're walking through.

It was a tough year. A dry one. I've felt depleted. To be honest, more depleted than I'd like to admit. And possibly more than any other time in my life.

I've been—we've been—through a desert. Haven't we? There was more loneliness, and uncertainty, more confusion and anger and more fear than some of us have ever faced. And it all hit us at once!

Some of us were prepared with sunscreen and weeks' worth of supplies. Some of us didn't even bring a hat!

And I know, I know, I know! It feels weird to be thinking about deserts as our minds are turning toward all the things of Christmas...snow, and ice, eggnog and cold.

It's weird to be talking about a desert, but you know what feels even stranger? To prepare for the Christmas season.

For many of us, it'll be strange, lonely...dry. I mean, can you even smell gravy over Zoom?

It's exactly the moment when you need your family most, and for so many we may not be able to even give a hug to our loved ones. Kiss a sweet new baby. Sing carols out of tune at the top of our lungs together. Open gifts. Laugh.

Wrapping gifts last night, I was just going through the same motions, pulling out the same decorations, planning the same traditions as every other year, but with none of the feeling.

It hasn't been joyful. It's been...*dry*. Like my burnt lips in the dream. Like the scorched and sandy ground I was standing on.

And yet the still small voice whispers: *drink deeply*.

Where and from what?

Take a moment to let the question land with the audience.

His Spirit, my friends. God's sweet and refreshing Spirit.

If I learned anything from this difficult season, it's that you can never have enough. Enough toilet paper hidden in the linen closet. Enough canned goods on the pantry shelf. There aren't enough batteries in the world to get you out of the darkness.

My own strength, my own faith, my own habits and traditions, no matter how good they are, are simply not enough.

And even though I may be in a dry or weary land, there is a river that never runs dry. I had to be reminded—perhaps even warned—in a dream that from this river, I can never get enough. I must run to it. Go back to His Spirit. Drink deeply and do it all over again.

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The Actor/Reader picks up a candle and lights it with a candle lighter.

Today, I'm lighting the candle of Advent as a reminder that even in a desert, God refreshes me. Even in the darkness, His light shines.

No matter what we feel, by His great mercy, we can find the joy of God again.

So let us go to Him, drink deeply, and know true joy.

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