

Third Sunday of Advent, December 17, 2023

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.
— *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

Terry Sanderson, 76, a retired optometrist, and Academy Award-winning actress Gwyneth Paltrow had been in litigation for seven years, ever since a collision between the two of them took place in 2016 on the slopes of a Utah skiing resort. Now they faced each other in court.

Witnesses were called. Statements were made. Both litigants took the stand. And when the dust settled, Paltrow prevailed and the long ordeal was over.

Except for what she said as she left the courtroom. Her words have become an internet meme. According to Sanderson himself, her exact words were: “Wish you well.”

She had walked behind his table, paused, placed a hand in the small of his back and whispered words intended for his ears only. He replied, “Thank you, dear.”

Although some critics wondered if she wasn’t sticking it to him, most observers agree that the exchange was genuine. She did, indeed, wish him well.

If you have Advent candles in your home, the candle in the wreath is not blue or purple; it is pink. It symbolizes joy. On this third Sunday of Advent, we celebrate joy. Today is also known as Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin, *Gaudete*, meaning “rejoice.” *Gaudete* is also the first word of today’s epistle reading: “Rejoice.”

The text goes on to urge: “Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil” (vv. 17-22).

All of these phrases are important: “Pray without ceasing.” Or, “Give thanks.” “Test everything.” “Hold fast to what is good.”

Gwyneth said, “Wish you well.” Three words. And on Gaudete Sunday, and during all of Advent and the Christmas season, we wish people well. It’s what we do. We send best wishes. We hope for the best as the year comes to an end.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: May I be your servant, O God, in spreading joy and good cheer today. Amen.



Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Proverbs 15-18
- Monday:** Proverbs 19-21
- Tuesday:** Proverbs 22-24
- Wednesday:** Proverbs 25-28
- Thursday:** Proverbs 29-31
- Friday:** Ecclesiastes 1-3
- Saturday:** Ecclesiastes 4-6

Verse to Remember

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." —Luke 2:10-11

Directions: Fill in the word square below using these 9 letters: Two O's, two I's, two R's, and one each of D, B and E. The resulting words can be read both across and down.

P	A	R	T	S
A				E
R				N
T				D
S	E	N	D	S

WORD BOX



ANSWERS:
adore,
robin, tried.

It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air. —W.T. Ellis