



23 FEBRUARY 2018  
**NOTHING BUT JOY**

**James 1:2** “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; 4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. 5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. 6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; 7 for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 9 Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up, 10 and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away. 12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. 13 No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. 14 But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; 15 then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved. 17 Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.”

The target audience of the book of James was the early persecuted church. It was written to encourage suffering Christians in the face of hardship and to strengthen them for Christian living. The antidote to suffering, and hardship, and doubt, and temptation, is joy. Such joy cannot be found in riches or power, but is rather a God-given gift.

**For Thought**

*Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down;  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
All thy faithful mercies crown!*

*Words: Charles Wesley*

**The Second Sunday in Lent**

The Cost of Discipleship

The Scripture passage for the day is drawn from Reuben Job and Norman Shawchuck, *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants*, (Nashville, The Upper Room 1983), 112.

This reflection is from my own devotional exercises for the day.