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Little did Isaac Watts know when he wrote the words *heaven and nature sing* for “Joy the World” that people would be singing this song 300 years later. Sometimes what we do may impact those around us, even hundreds of years later. Just imagine doing something today that connects to someone’s life 300 years from now. Did you ever stop and think that what you do each day may bring loving joy to someone near you, even if you don’t know it? Even your smile may change the life of someone, as retired major league ballplayer Frank Bettger learned. After an injury he became a motivational speaker and invited people to make a promise to smile for 30 days. Listen as he reports about one person’s experience trying his advice:

I have asked thousands of men and women in audiences all over the country for a pledge to smile, just for thirty days, their happiest smile at every living creature they see. Easily 75 percent of the people in each audience willingly raised their hands. What has been the result? I quote from one letter received from a Knoxville, Tennessee, man. It is typical of several letters that come to me.

“My wife and I had just about agreed to separate. Of course, I thought she was entirely at fault. Within a few days after I began to put this idea [of smiling] into action, happiness was restored in my home. I then came to realize that I had been losing out in business because of a sullen losing attitude. At the end of the day, I would go home and take it out on my wife and children. It was all my fault, not my wife’s at all. I am a totally different man from what I was a year ago. I’m happier because I’ve made others happy too. Now everybody greets me with a smile. In addition, my business has shown surprising improvement.<sup>1</sup>

Even a smile can bring loving joy to the world, though God suggested the prophet Isaiah be even bolder than smiling by speaking tenderly to God’s people facing distress. “Comfort, comfort my people,” God told the prophet, for their suffering will soon end. They lived in uncertain times when the surrounding armies of the Assyrians had been invading their land and the Babylonians had gained even more power to attack the people and would carry some of them away into Exile.

In the midst of this uncertainty, God promised that in the wilderness a voice would cry out to prepare the way of the Lord, making straight highways in the desert for God to bring the people home who have been forcibly removed. Every valley would be lifted up and every mountain made low, and uneven ground would become level. It's almost as though even creation would be turned upside down, for God would do something so amazing that the high would become low and the low would become high.

Isaiah heard a voice telling him to do something more than just smile, for he's told to cry out and speak up. Isaiah wonders, "What shall I say?" God then offered these words of hope for the prophet to proclaim, "People are like withering grass and fading flowers, but God's word will last forever."

Isaiah discovered that even though humanity is fragile, God could still bring loving joy to the world and invited Isaiah to bring this news to the people. If God asked you and me to bring the same good news, I wonder how we might do that?

A smile might be a good way to begin, for even it can change lives, but there are so other many ways we can bring loving joy to the world as well. Maybe you can offer a kindly spoken word at just the right time, a hopeful post on Facebook, a hand-written letter or card, a visit to someone home-bound or in the hospital, or some home cooked food for someone hungry.

In the midst of a world where we create so much suffering, is it really possible that we can bring joy? That's a question the Dalai Lama reflected upon, and he suggested:

We create most of our suffering, so it should be logical that we also have the ability to create more joy. It simply depends on the attitudes, the perspectives, and the reactions we bring to situations and to our relationships with other people.<sup>2</sup>

One is never too young or too old to bring loving joy to the world, as was the case with a family at the mall. Singer Becky Kelley tells what happened one day while shopping:

While at the mall a couple of years ago, my then four-year-old nephew, Spencer, saw kids lined up to see Santa Claus. Having been taught as a toddler that Christmas is the holiday that Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, he asked his mom, “Where’s the line to see Jesus?” My sister mentioned this to my dad, who immediately became inspired and jotted words down to a song in just a few minutes. After putting music to the words, and doing a quick recording at home, he received a great response from friends. He sent the song off to Nashville...<sup>3</sup>

From that idea came the song “Where’s the Line to See Jesus?” *[play song]*

In reflecting about this song, the writer commented: “Out of the mouths of babes come profound truths that many adults cannot understand. Hopefully Spencer’s observation will cause people all over to reflect on the love of Jesus,

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<sup>1</sup> Hodgins, Michael. *1002 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers* (Kindle Locations 3407-3417). Zondervan. Kindle Edition, #510.

and that one day we will all stand in line to see Him.”

How many times have you stood in line? Sometimes we feel as though it’s wasted time, for we’re always in a hurry. If you find yourself standing in line the next few weeks, you may hear people grumbling, complaining about having to wait, but waiting is what this season of Advent is all about. God’s people have been waiting for countless generations—waiting for hope, waiting for peace. During this season of Advent we wait once again for the coming birth of loving joy, something you can offer even while standing in line through a smile or a kind word. Slow down, wait, and may you offer loving joy to the world.

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<sup>2</sup> Lama, Dalai. *The Book of Joy* (p. 14). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> <http://wheresthelinetoseejesus.com/>