

Theme: “The Gifts of Christmas” – Joy

Text: Luke 2:10-11

10 Then the angel said to them [the shepherds], “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!” sings the familiar Christmas carol. *“If you want to be happy in a million ways, for the holidays you can’t beat home sweet home!”* sings another. Nearly every other Christmas carol that exists also sings about the warmth, the cheer, and the happiness this time of year brings. Maybe some of your best memories in life have taken place around Christmas time. If you pay any attention to children around this time of year you’ll probably notice their faces lit up with cheer and that they have a sense of excitement about them (even more than usual!). Yes, as we take a look at the third **“Gift of Christmas”** in our Advent sermon series, it’s probably pretty obvious that **“Joy”** is one of the gifts that we receive at Christmas.

Christmas usually is a very joy-filled time. However, this is not always the case. It can be a very lonely and sad time of year. If we are separated from family and friends, or for those who have lost loved ones (especially if it was around the holidays) Christmas time can feel *especially* sad and lonely. Depression rates (even suicides) usually skyrocket around the holidays. Hardships and personal tragedies do not take “time off” during the Christmas season. Sickness, accidents, injuries, and even deaths do not have a “Christmas break.” Even the family time we do get to spend around the holidays can be difficult because of strained relationships, broken homes, and relatives who are, well, just plain hard to like! Sometimes just the stress and amount of preparations that go into the holidays can suck the joy right out of the Christmas season. Is there really any guarantee that **joy** will be one of **“The Gifts of Christmas”** we’ll receive this year?

There will be if we look for **true joy**; the **joy** which the angels proclaimed in our text. What is this gift of **joy** and where can it be found? Let’s look again at these familiar words the angel proclaimed on that first Christmas night.

First of all, we find *what* this **joy** is in the first verse of our text. We hear the angel tell us that this is a **joy** that drives out fear because it is based on God’s “Good News.” **“Do not be afraid,”** the angel told the shepherds, **“for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people” (v. 10).** These **“good tidings”** from God’s messenger bring us **“great joy”** because they tell us of our forgiveness and the removal of our sins by the Savior, **“Christ the Lord,”** who was born on Christmas day!

This “Good News” brings us **joy** because it drives out our fear of death and the eternal punishment that our sins deserved. We are no longer separated from God by our sins; we are made His children by the Christ Child.

This “Good News” brings us **joy** because it drives out our fear of **life** and all that it can throw at us. We know that we have a loving Father in heaven who cares for us so much that He gave up His only Son to save us. We know that we have a Savior in Jesus who came to be one of us and went through all that we go through as human beings—and more! The book of Hebrews tells us, **“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).** Jesus suffered more pain, loneliness, and rejection than anyone else ever has, and yet never sinned once! His life ended in one of the most humiliating and painful ways ever invented: crucifixion. He did all of this willingly to pay for our sins. We know we have a Savior who also lives again to rule over and direct all things—including our individual lives—for our spiritual blessing and eternal welfare. What then do we have left to fear? We can say confidently with the Psalmist, **“The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.” (Psalm 118:6).**

Secondly, in our text we see where this true **joy** is to be found. We hear the angel tell us that this **joy** is rooted in Jesus and the forgiveness and salvation He came to bring. **“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (v. 11).** This **joy** is not just an *emotional* joy that changes with our mood. Although clearly our emotions are involved—it is almost impossible to hear the story of God’s love for us coming down at Christmas, or to think of the cross Jesus bore for us without feeling some *emotion*—this gift of true **joy** is not *dictated* by our emotions. It is a **joy** that is not dictated by our situation or circumstances either.

Now, certainly we are going to be happier at some times rather than others and in times of tragedy or disappointment we probably are going to be sad, but this **joy** that Jesus came to bring us is not dependant on either our emotions or our situation. It is a **joy** that led the Apostle Paul to write, **“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)**—and he wrote those words from prison!

This **joy**, we could say, is “positional.” As Paul says, it is **“in the Lord.”** **Nehemiah 8:10** reminds us **“The joy of the LORD is your strength.”** This **joy** is rooted in Christ and our relationship with Him by faith.

- † In Christ you are a child of God **(John 1:12).**
- † In Christ you have been redeemed and forgiven all your sins **(Colossians 1:14).**
- † In Christ you are more than a conqueror **(Romans 8:37).**
- † In Christ you can do all things through His strength **(Philippians 4:13).**
- † In Christ you are an heir of heaven itself **(1 Peter 1:3-4).**

When we remember the angel’s words that this Savior, Christ the Lord, who brings all these things has been **“born to you”** our hearts will truly be filled with **joy!**

What are we to do with this gift of **joy**? What did the shepherds do after they heard the angels **“good tidings of great joy” (v. 10)?**

Do you want more **joy** in your Christmas celebration? Do you want more **joy** in your life? Then follow the example of the shepherds! When they heard the angels **“good tidings of great joy”** what did they do? They immediately went to see Jesus for themselves to find out more about this “Good News” of a Savior. We read again some of the familiar words that follow our sermon text in Luke chapter 2, **“So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger (Luke 2:15-16 NKJV).** When the shepherds heard the “Good News” from the angel they didn’t immediately plan a Christmas party or a gift exchange to celebrate the occasion; they went to Jesus—the Gift—and worshiped Him and their joy increased!

If we want to increase our **joy** this Christmas then we need to go to Jesus! We need to check our focus. Is the focus of our Christmas on the celebration, or is it on the Savior? Do we look for our Christmas **joy** in the endless activities going on this time of year, or in the number of friends and family we get to see, or in the quality of the presents we receive? Or is our **joy** in Jesus? **(***Let me be very clear: There is nothing wrong with doing any of those things—gifts, family get-togethers, Christmas parties, etc. In fact, we are having a get-together to singing carols and eating cookies after the service. All of these things can help bring us joy at Christmas time. But they are not the joy of Christmas. Only Jesus can give that kind of **joy!***).****

After they worshipped Jesus, what did the shepherds do next? They went out and spread this “Good News” of “**great joy.**” “**Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child**” (Luke 2:17).

If we want to multiply this gift of **joy** which Jesus brings us, then joyfully spread this message of **joy!** When we hear good news—especially the good news of a baby being born!—what do we usually do? We share the news! You text or post pictures and messages. You call friends and family members on the phone: “Guess what happened?!” You tell the people you see, “I’ve got some good news!” We can hardly contain ourselves!

Christmas is a unique time for us Christians to share this “Good News” of great **joy** with the rest of the world. It’s probably the only time of the year when it’s “normal” for even the unbelieving world to hear about Jesus, even in public places. People who would usually never go to church or open up a Bible can hear over the speakers at the store the words to familiar Christmas hymns that sing about Jesus! It’s pretty amazing, isn’t it, to be standing in line at a store and hear the words from Christmas hymns, like “Silent Night,” being sung: “*Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!*” This can provide us with good opportunities to ask others if they know what those Christmas carols are singing about.

Or when you hear people complaining about the stress and busyness of the season ask them if they realize what Christmas is all about. It really has nothing to do with stress, marathon shopping sprees, or headache-inducing hectic-ness! It is a season of **joy** because of Jesus! Ask them if they’d like to hear more about that **joy**. Tell them that your church is celebrating that **joy** and invite them to our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

We have come here once again to see Jesus and hear the “Good News” that He came to save us through His sinless life, His suffering and sacrifice on the cross, and glorious resurrection from the grave. These “**good tidings**” bring us “**great joy**”—true joy; lasting joy; eternal joy! Now let’s go out and share this Christmas gift of **joy** with others. That is truly the best gift we can give! Amen.