

## The Advent of Joy – Luke 2:10-11

*“...Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11 (NIV)*

**Introduction:** For many of us, Christmas is a time of rejoicing, a time of celebration. There are festive lights to see, family get-togethers, Christmas programs such as what we heard today, and of course on Christmas morning there are always gifts which are exchanged. So as Andy Williams sings, it can be the most wonderful time of the year for a lot of people. But at the same time, for others...Christmas is anything but wonderful. In fact, more suicides occur and more alcohol is consumed during the holiday season than any other season. The Christmas season also can also be a time of tremendous financial stress and emotional strain on families.

But what I want to talk about this morning is the fact that there is available to everyone a joy that can transcend all the pain and difficulties that can be associated with Christmas. We have seen that fact evident in some of the people involved in the Christmas story itself.

Joseph found out that his fiancé was pregnant and he contemplated divorcing her – he had to be an emotional basket case. Yet when the angel told him the truth about Mary’s baby, Joseph rejoiced.

Mary was pregnant and not married, and no doubt became the scandalous talk of the town. Then in her 9th month of pregnancy she is forced to travel 70 miles just to pay their taxes. And when they got to Bethlehem, the only place they could find to have her baby was a dirty stable. Yet when she held her child who is the Son of God, she rejoiced.

The shepherds were one of the lowest classes of people in Jesus’ day. Theirs was a dirty, smelly job that paid hardly anything. They were the outcasts of society. Yet, after they heard the angels proclaim to them the good news that a Savior had been born, and they went to see the child for themselves, the Bible says, *“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” Luke 2:20 (NIV).*

The message of Christmas is good news and it’s a reason to rejoice. So, the message of the angels to the shepherds still rings true today. *“Today...a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”* Now you may not feel like rejoicing, but the message of Christmas is filled with such hope and such wonder, it’s hard not to be joyful and I hope to share some of that Advent Joy with you today. First, let me share with you:

### 1. Reasons to Rejoice

We’ve already touched on the fact that there are a lot of things going on in our world that weighs us down with worry. Because of the threat of terrorism, America is not as safe a place to live as it once was. Because of a weak economy, our financial stability is not as strong as it used to be. Because we live in a fallen world, immorality and violence and sickness and disease and a host of other social ills have left us wondering how

things could get any worse. All these worries are painful reminders of what our sin has caused. It's enough to make us depressed and want to throw in the towel.

Anne Murray had a song out in the 80's that said, "*We sure could use a little good news today.*" and I agree. That is why I tell you again from God's word: The angel said, "*I bring you good news of great joy...a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*" Into this dark depressing world was born the light of the world. That's good news! That's hope! That's great joy!

One reason this is good news of great joy is because it's:

**A. A Message of Salvation.** That message is what we call the gospel. The word "*gospel*" literally means "*good news.*" And the good news is this: God thinks so much of you that He was willing to leave the splendor in Heaven and come into this world in the form of a baby. He lived a perfect life and when the time was right, He willingly went to the cross and died in our place. But on the third day He rose from the dead. And now, by placing our faith and trust in Him, even though we don't deserve it, we can be forgiven of our past, restored to our right relationship with God, and promised the gift of eternal life in Heaven.

Now I don't know about you but that's good news to me! To know that Christmas means that God loved us so much that He would send us His only Son to save us from our sin, that is good news of great joy!

Another reason this is good news of great joy is because it's:

**B. A Means of Hope.** Everything on earth is temporary. Christmas decorations will come down after the holidays – they are temporary. Our clothes, our cars, even our houses, they're all temporary. But the good news of Christmas is that Jesus offers us a hope that is eternal. He offers us a home that will never deteriorate. He offers us a life that will be pain free and will never die. So if you're looking for hope this Christmas, look no further than Jesus Christ. He can give you a hope that is out of this world!

**Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)** says, "*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*" Jesus could endure the cross because He knew what lay ahead for Him. And the hope He offers helps us face this world and all its troubles, because we know what lies ahead for us in Heaven. That's good news of great joy!

So, this morning, if you're in need of this joy, let me suggest some practical ways that will help you rejoice this Christmas season.

## **2. Ways to Rejoice**

**A. Recall what makes you Glad.** Instead of focusing on the painful memories of Christmas past, turn your focus on the things that bring you peace and gladness. I know it's easy to dwell on our problems. It's easy to dwell on the fact that certain loved ones are not here to celebrate Christmas with. But when it comes to what we do with those realities, it comes down to a choice. Am I going to choose to sink in misery because of what I don't have, or will I rise in appreciation of what I do have? And what we do have are good memories of good

times. If you were to ask Mary what she remembered about that night, she wouldn't tell you about the long journey to Bethlehem, or being put out in a stable...she would say, *"I got to hold my baby."* Secondly,

**B. Remember the Reason for the Season.** In a B.C. Comic strip, one ant asked his dad, *"Who is Jesus?"* The dad replied, *"He's the reason for the season."* The kid ant says, *"But I thought Santa Claus was the reason."* And the dad replies, *"He is-if you prefer an X Box instead of everlasting life."*

With all the other commercialism that is associated with the Christmas season; it's easy to forget what Christmas is all about. The media and the retail industry are doing everything they can to turn our attention away from the real meaning of Christmas. So it's up to us to keep the real meaning alive in the hearts and minds of our children.

We don't celebrate Santa Claus Day or a Winter Holiday...We celebrate Christmas because of Christ. It's Christ's birthday. God sent us Jesus not to give us another holiday, but to give us a Savior. So take time this Christmas to remember that. Third,

**C. Resolve to Spread the Joy to Others.** Christmas is not so much about getting as it is about giving. So this Christmas, if you want to really experience joy, make a special effort to be a joy to someone else. Give without expecting something in return. Spend time with someone who is lonely. Make a phone call to someone you've not spoken to in a long time. Send a Christmas card to a soldier you don't even know. Visit a nursing home and pray with the patients. Smile and be courteous to that grumpy person you're standing in line with. Do something to brighten someone's day for the glory of Christ. Finally,

**D. Receive the Joy of Christmas for Yourself.** If you're here today, and you don't know Christ personally as your Lord and Savior, you can't possibly know anything about the kind of joy we've been talking about. You've got to receive it in order to experience it, and you've got to experience it in order to understand it. Receiving Christ as your Savior is so easy. When the angel told the shepherds about the baby in the manger, he told them how to get there and what to look for, but they had to make the decision to go and find the child.

This morning, you've heard about the baby in the manger, and I've told you how to get to Heaven to be with Him. Now it's up to you to come to Him and receive the free gift of eternal life He offers. Jesus Christ was born on Christmas Day, and He can be born in your heart this morning by simply turning your life over to Him.

**Conclusion:** Will you bow with me as we extend the invitation? If you want to experience the kind of joy we've been talking about this morning, here's how. If you've never trusted Christ as your Savior and Lord, simply pray this prayer with me. *"Dear Jesus... I need you as my Lord and Savior...because I am a sinner... I need your forgiveness...Right now, I repent of my sins... and I ask you into my life...Thank you for saving me...Thank you for giving me peace in my heart...Thank you for giving me joy...Thank you for giving me a home in heaven...Amen"*

If you prayed that prayer, you just got saved. We'd love to rejoice with you this morning, so as we sing this hymn, I'll ask you to come down here and make your public profession of your faith in Christ.

If you need to make any other decision – perhaps to rededicate your life to Christ, or to unite with this Church by baptism, by a statement of your faith, or by a transfer of your church membership, or perhaps you just need to come and pray, this is your opportunity to come. As we stand and sing, you follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit this morning.