

JOY



ADVENT 2019 SERMON NOTES

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Where's your joy this morning? Is it in a dusty box filled with black widows in the back of your garage, labeled Christmas 2009?

We know normal joy, but Christmas is not about normal joy. The Bible says that Christmas is about GREAT JOY! Christmas isn't just an occasion for joy if you get the right gift or the right people come to Christmas and the wrong people don't. Christmas transcends, it rises above our present circumstances and offers what the Bible says is GREAT JOY!

There is something about Christmas so remarkable that pagan astrologers traveled long distances westward to find this Christmas child. The baby in that manger is so good, so pure, so holy that a wicked king commanded the slaughter of innocent children. Blue-collar shepherds, who had experienced everything the hills of Bethlehem had to offer them, stood before the angel of the Lord and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear and astonishment. What did the angel say to them? "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people" (Luke 2:10).

This is good news of great joy that will be for all people, not just for kings, but for the poor shepherds. Not just for the Jews, not just for Abraham's blood line, but for every Gentile. This joy isn't just for the few in Jerusalem; this joy will extend into Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the world. It's for all kinds of people, for every place, for every time. "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

Joy is the stuff of everyday life, but the Bible reserves the greatest moment, the greatest turning point in human history as a moment of great awe and wonder, GREAT JOY! Why is this joy the greatest of all joys?

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-- ²the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- ³that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (1 John 1:1-4)

Jesus in that manger was the greatest joy in human history because of Who He is. This man the disciples looked upon and touched was eternal and offering eternal life (v.2). He had no beginning. He will have no ending. He is not a part of creation. He is the co-creator of the universe and all life comes from Him (John 1:1-

3). And this One who is eternal, this One is the one who was made manifest to us. John says, "This One is the one we heard and saw and touched with our very hands!" (v. 1).

Moses longed to see God more fully and was only allowed to see only a partial glimpse of the back of God (Exodus 33:23). Isaiah only saw the hem of the Lord's garment that filled the temple and he cried out, "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:1-5). Up until Christ, no one had ever seen God except the only begotten God.

Everything changed on Christmas Day. What does the Christmas carol say? *Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity.* Your joy of joys is packaged on Christmas as a frail, unimpressive, humble baby Jesus who came for the sins of the world. Christ was rich, yet for your sake he became poor. His loving and passionate humility didn't start at the cross; it began in Bethlehem at His birth. Because of Christmas we see His love, His wisdom, His compassion, His humility up close and personal with human flesh. In Jesus, God has come near. This is why Jesus is called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14, Matt 1:22-23). He is God with us!

John just piles these verbs on each other (vs. 1). He follows a pattern you would use in the ancient world to attest and make a case for something. This isn't just a nice story; John is swearing in a deposition. We have a group of eyewitnesses who are willing to swear in a court of law about the miraculous interactions with the God who took on human flesh. We heard Him, we saw Him, we touched Him. What more can we do to convince you? God is among us! God isn't out there somewhere beyond the stars. He is in our midst. On Christmas Day, God wrote Himself into the story. This spectacular love story isn't just a story of joy, but one of GREAT JOY.

John is saying that the only way you are going to have true fellowship with us, the only way you are going to have a true interaction with the Father is to interact with His Son who took on flesh (vs. 3-4). And it's then and only then that your joy will be full (v. 4). No understanding of the Father, no fellowship with His people, no joy will be full unless you have come to grips with the Christmas child who has taken on flesh.

YOUR JOY, YOUR CHRISTMAS

The joy of Christmas, the joy of the incarnate, fleshly Christmas child is like a subterranean river that flows underneath your whole, challenging life. Christmas is about an undercurrent of joy that Jesus desperately wants you to understand and experience. You will not be able to drain His spring. It transcends all the tragedy and pain of today. Jesus says, "Get your bucket out and I will fill it!" It's not a puddle of stagnant water. These are rivers of living water that the Living God is offering you this morning.

One of the greatest desires of our heavenly Father is for us to be filled with Christmas JOY. We have heard and have seen and been touched by the One we call Immanuel, God is with us. We have fellowship with one another and we have fellowship with the Triune God, and all of this happened so that we can experience the exceeding, GREAT JOY of the Lord, that our joy would be full.

God longs for us to curl up on His lap after a hard day, a hard week, a hard year because we know it is the safest place in the universe. Pour out your heart to Him tonight before you fall asleep or get up early in the morning. Allow Him to cover you with His love. Break into spontaneous praise and dance before Him. Belt out your worship to Him because of who you are because of this Christmas child.

In just a moment, the Christmas child is going to return and all of this will be over. In a blink of an eye, our time in this broken, diseased and sinful world will be over. This world will be whole again and we will be held in His loving arms for all of eternity. Rejoice in the Lord and again I say rejoice!