

The Joy of Christmas **Luke 2:8-20 (NKJV)**

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "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. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" 15 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." 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

In those broad undulating fields lying around Bethlehem, where Ruth began her mission of gleaning, and where David tended the flock of his father Jesse, shepherds were still keeping watch over their flock by night. But that was a night never to be forgotten. That night a star appeared that was destined to supersede the brightness of the sun, and to fill the whole earth with the glory of the invisible God. Good tidings. *James Smith and Robert Lee, Handfuls on Purpose for Christian Workers and Bible Students, Series I–XIII, five-volume edition., vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 185.*

Isaiah 35:10 (NKJV)

10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Christmas for some is the most joyful time of the year.

For others it only brings up sad memories of Christmases past and losses suffered.

But Christmas is always a time for joy, great joy because it transcends the life we have here and reaches to eternity.

No one in our story today could comprehend the joy that was coming into the world, not even the angels could fully appreciate it.

I. The Joy of Fulfilled Expectations

- A. Every year when I was a kid my mother's family would come for Christmas. They would all bring the best things to eat, dressings and desserts and presents.

1. The house would be full of people grandma, brothers & sisters, aunts and uncles.
 2. It was the best of times.
 3. Each year on December 26, I would begin to look forward to next Christmas.
- B. That first Christmas, the world and even the angels had been looking forward to that day for a hundred generations.
1. With each circle of the sun man was still just as lost in sin.
 2. There seemed to be no hope of a Savior, a deliverer promise since the sin of Adam & Eve in the garden.
 3. The only glimmer of hope came from God's chosen seed that trickled down through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 4. Genesis 49:8–12 (NKJV)
 - a. 8 “Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. 11 Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk.
 5. Genesis 49:10 (AMP)
 - a. 10 The scepter or leadership shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes to Whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.
 - b. They translate it that way because the root word for Shiloh means peace or joy.

II. The joy of a prisoner released

A. A couple good old hymns

1. The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin.
The light of the world is Jesus

like sunshine and noon-day His glory shown in,
the light of the world is Jesus.

2. He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

B. Luke 4:18 (NKJV)

1. 18 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

C. Prison is a hopeless place.

1. And that is the place that we were before Jesus.
2. A hopeless place.

D. But when the prisoner is set free there is joy, especially since he is guilty.

E. Romans 6:22 (NKJV)

- F. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

III. The joy of a debt paid

A. Luke 7:41–42 (NKJV)

1. 41 “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?”
2. I would ask the question which one was the most joyful.
3. This story is told after the woman who was no doubt a great sinner came in behind Jesus as he ate at a Pharisee’s house and anointed his feet.
4. She was thankful and joyful when Jesus pronounce here debt was released.

B. Why do you think Matthew records debts and debtors in the Lord’s Prayer?

1. It is because sin is like a debt.
2. With each sin we go farther into debt.
3. Very shortly there is no possibility of restitution.
4. But Christmas comes to remove our debts through faith in a crucified and

risen Savior.

C. The joy of debt released.

1. Now if you consider the debt that you have been forgiven as little, like the Pharisee then your joy will be little.
2. But if you, like me, consider your debt of sin to be more like the national debt then your joy will be full.

IV. The joy of an eternal home

A. Jesus came to change our destiny.

1. He did not come to just give us an example of how to live.
2. He did not come just to make our lives fuller and peaceful
3. He came that we might have eternal life in heaven with Him.

B. Nothing in this life can compare

1. Almost exactly 10 years ago our house caught fire and burned.
2. And I will always be thankful for all the friends that came to our aid.
3. We went to work right away and by the middle of May we moved into our new house.
4. It was a time of thankfulness and joy.
5. But it will not compare to when the words of 2 Corinthians is fulfilled.

C. 2 Corinthians 5:1–8 (NKJV)

1. 1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

D. John 15:11 (NKJV)

1. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

