

Slide #1 - Title

“Great Joy” - Luke 2:10-12 (Christmas Eve Sermon)

Slide #2

Luke 2:10-12

¹⁰ But the angel said to [the shepherds], "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Slide #3

Introduction

Of all the wonderful promises contained in the Christmas story, the one that seems to be missing the most today is “great joy.” How many people do you know that would describe their life as being full of GREAT JOY? **(Click)** And yet that is the proclamation by the angels to the shepherds. The Savior of the world would bring good news of great joy for all people. The angels declared joy. **(Click)** Mary and Joseph were amazed with joy. The wise men were filled with joy. The shepherds returned with rejoicing in their hearts. Even John the Baptist leaped for joy in Elizabeth’s womb.

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I am sure we all could make a long list of reasons for the lack joy in our lives. **(Click)** That list would most certainly include sickness, stress, setbacks, suffering, struggles of life, sin in our own lives, and that of the world around us. **(Click)** The biggest mistake we often make is to think the happiness and joy are one and the same. **(Click)** In the Bible that is not the case.

(Click) Happiness depends on the circumstances of one’s life. If my life happens to happen the way I want it to happen, then I am happy. Right? **(Click)** The word joy on the other hand is a relationship word. **(Click)** Being part of a family, for instance does not change if you become sick or poor or lose your job or homeless? No, not at all!

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The Bible tells us that that the shepherds returned with joy in their hearts, but did the circumstances of their lives suddenly change because of this Christmas announcement? **(Click)** Not at all! When they returned after seeing the baby Jesus, **(Click)** they were still financially poor. They were still considered the lowest class of the social order. Their sheep still smelled bad and required constant care. They returned to the same wife and kids they had before Jesus was born, **(Click)** but still they were full of joy! Their response illustrates a secret to joy that

many miss. So how can we maybe not be happy about the circumstances of our lives, but still have joy. Our text gives us some hints as to how this happens.

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1. PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The first key to understanding this Christmas Joy is to understand our personal significance. **(Click)** It is to ask “how important are we to God? True, the Scriptures warn us against thinking too highly of ourselves, but you must also understand who God created you to be. **(Click)** You are not an accident. God created you on purpose.

Notice in that Christmas Message what the **(Click)** angel said to the shepherds, “For unto you.” Imagine what this truth meant to the shepherds. God’s amazing love was for them. They may not make the front page of the Jerusalem Times, but they made into the pages of Scripture! **(Click)** They were special because God loved them. God cared for them, and he cares for you and me.

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When my son was in the first grade, his teacher gave star sticker to students who did their work, listened to the teacher, or demonstrated kindness to other students. My son went on a star crusade. At the dinner table each night, I received the “star report.” He told me how many stars he received and which boys did not get stars because they played with their food at lunch. **(Click)** These little paper stickers have a monetary value of less than a penny, but they were invaluable treasures to my son. Why? **(Click)** Because the star meant somebody noticed me. Someone thinks I’m special. Guess what? God thinks you are special. **(Click)** He does not give stickers to prove His love; He sent His only begotten Son!

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2. TRUSTING the PROMISES OF SCRIPTURE

The second key to experiencing great joy is to move, trusting the promises of God. **(Click)** The instructions to the shepherds were to go to the city of David, the town of Bethlehem. Did they just receive that good news and go back to tending their sheep? **(Click)** No, they got up and went to Bethlehem. The birth of Christ in Bethlehem was a fulfillment of numerous prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus Christ is not only the fulfillment of Scripture; He is the Word of God. We encounter His guidance, peace, and joy through the precious promises of His Word. But those promises are made for us to act upon them.

(Click) We can trust the promises of God when it says, “You are loved. God will never leave you. He has a plan for your life. Though you go through the valley of the shadow of death, His goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.” You can rejoice

because this is the day that the LORD has made. **(Click)** C.S. Lewis said that “God must find our prayers very weak indeed when compared to all the promises offered to believers.”

3. PARDON FROM SIN

The next key is knowing your sin is forgiven. **(Click)** The angels declared that a Savior is born. The saving work of Christ is not a political revolt or an economic revolution; it is the forgiveness of sin. **(Click)** King David said in Psalm 32:1, “Happy is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered.” Sin consists of the unrighteous deeds that we commit and those things we omit to include in our lives. **(Click)** Sin separate us from a Holy God. Sin causes pain and suffering. The pain can be physical consequences or emotional trauma created by living a life in disobedience to God’s will and plan for our lives.

(Click) For people who have not trusted Christ as Savior, the words of the great hymn Joy to The World summarize what needs to be done, “let every heart prepare him room.” For you and me who know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, Peter says we need to develop a farsighted faith, never forgetting the cleansing of past sins (2 Peter 1:9). **(Click)** We sing each Sunday in the offertory, “restore to me the joy of my salvation.” When we continually remember that glorious day when your sin was forgiven, keeps joy in your heart. Jesus is the Savior of the world, and His salvation produces great joy.

4. PARTICIPATE WITH SAINTS

The four key to this **(Click)** Christmas Joy is to know we never stand alone in our Christian journey. God has placed us in a family of believers who support us, encourage us and pray for us. **(Click)** While Mary received the angel’s message by herself, it did not take **(Click)** Joseph long to take her as his wife, to support her and stand by her. While we do not know how the rest of her family reacted to the news of her pregnancy, **(Click)** we know Elizabeth was there for her. Even after the birth of the baby, Mary and Joseph were not alone, because angels told shepherds about what happened. **(Click)** The Christmas shepherds are described as rejoicing together over what they had experienced. A wise man once said, **(Click)** “Friends double our joys and divide our sorrows.”

Developing these positive and supportive relationships are critical to us following Christ and experiencing great joy. Believers in Christ are described in Scripture as members of the same family, parts of the same body, and stones of the same building. Without significant relationships, you will never possess the promise of great joy.

CONCLUSION:

During my last trip to Virginia, my grand-daughter asked me to do some puzzles with her. We poured the pieces out, and I set the box up so we could see the picture. I noticed that Breana never looked at the box. She just started putting the pieces together without doing the edge pieces first! Occasionally, she looked at me and smiled. This process repeated itself with

several puzzles, and I realized a major difference between me and my grand-daughter. **(Click)** I was setting the box up with the picture showing and starting with the edge pieces because my goal was to complete the task by putting the puzzle together in the most effective manner. **(Click)** Breana's goal was to enjoy spending time with her papa.

Zig Ziglar, management guru and author reported in his book "Over the Top" that preschoolers will laugh, giggle, or smile over 400 times a day! Maybe that's why Jesus said, "To experience the kingdom of heaven, we must become as a little child." **(Click)** Great joy is God's Christmas gift to you. **(Click)** Please don't wait to open it? Amen.