

Sermon: “Good News Brings Great Joy”

Text: Luke 2:8-14

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December 7, 2008 (2nd Sunday in Advent)

Luke 2:8-14 (NIV) ⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

Introduction: The word “joy” comes from the same root as the word for “grace” and “to give thanks” and another form is simply translated “greetings!”

I can remember the time when my son, David, was born. Sorry about this, but there were not enough Antonia Cleopatra cigars in Miami County. A 25 cent cigar was not too good for my boy – and that’s in 1975 money, too. I was giving them away to strangers.

Joy at the birth of a son is not unique to the first century. All we guys look at our new babies and see ball players, presidents, and CEO’s.

Some people intentionally wait today to have children, while others have them before they are ready. Usually, though, the news of a baby is good news.

“Good news brings great joy.” Like the...

I. Good News of a Baby (Savior)

Yet ...

A. Infertility was a problem even back then (**Luke 1:44, 58**).

My mother was not supposed to have any children, but ended up having five children - all boys!

This year, about 4 million babies will be born in this country, yet thousands of couples who want to have a child will face another year of disappointment and frustration.

Nearly one out of every six couples has a problem with infertility at some point in their lives. Over half of these couples overcome the problem and have a baby. In the time of Zechariah and Elizabeth, though, there were no medical advances to offer hope. In fact, anyone without children was looked at as “cursed by God.”

The situation was not near as hopeless as Abraham and Sarah, but Elizabeth was at least 55. God, though, was merciful and blessed Zechariah and Elizabeth with a son they desperately wanted. Elizabeth says to Mary:

Luke 1:44 (NIV) ⁴⁴As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Even in the womb John knew His Savior’s mother. Acquaintances of Elizabeth were also happy.

Luke 1:58 (NIV) ⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

One could have ...

B. No better news unless it was unexpected.

Matthew 1:18-19 (NIV) ¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

A new baby is usually good news unless unexpected. You’re what?

We all know couples who have been surprised with babies in their forties or even fifties, just when most parents are saying good-bye to their children. But here there was even a bigger surprise because Joseph and Mary had never done anything to create the possibility for a child. Joseph must have been skeptical to say the least of Mary’s explanation for the pregnancy.

This baby was special, though. He would be the SAVIOR. The Scripture says that John the Baptist would be a joy to his parents (pause), but Jesus would be “Joy to the World” and for those who would accept Him.

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II. Good News of Salvation.

A. Salvation is the way to have joy (Luke 10:16-24).

Luke 10:16-24 (NIV) ¹⁶“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” ¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” ¹⁸He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” ²¹At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. ²²“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” ²³Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

There is joy in knowing that your name is written down in the Book of Life. People will notice that you are a Christian by the joy in your life.

The story is told of a laborer who was a mature Christian and gave a solid testimony before all who knew him. His boss came to him one day and said, “You know, whatever you’ve got, I want. You have such peace and joy and contentment. How can I get this?”

The laborer said, “Go to your home, put on your best suit, come down here, and work in the mud with the rest of us – and you can have it.”

“What are you talking about? I could never do that. I’m the boss and you are the worker. I can’t do that. That’s beneath my dignity.” The boss came back a couple months later and said, “I’ll ask you again, what is it that you have and how can I get it?” “I told you, go put on your best suit, come down here, and work in the mud with the rest of us – and you can have it.” Again the boss became furious and walked off.

Finally, in desperation he came back to the laborer and said, “I don’t care what it takes! I’ll do anything.” The laborer said, “Will you put on your best suit, come down here, and work in the mud?” The boss agreed that he would do even that. Then the laborer said, “You don’t have to.”

Do you see the point? The laborer knew what was standing between the boss and Christ ---- pride and self. (Green, p.290)

B. Joy is a Process (I Peter 1:6-9).

I Peter 1:6-9 (NIV) ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

We must recognize that as we mature in Christ, there will be more joy in our lives. We also understand that joy is not conditional on conditions or even people.

Dr. R. A. Torrey was one of the great Bible teachers of a past generation and a founder of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA University). He and Mrs. Torrey went through a time of great heartache when their twelve-year old daughter was accidentally killed. The funeral was held on a gloomy, miserable, rainy day. They stood around the grave and watched as the body of their little girl was put away. As they turned away, Mrs. Torrey said, “I’m so glad that Elizabeth is with the Lord, and not in that box.”

But even knowing this to be true, their hearts were broken. Dr. Torrey said that the next day, as he was walking down the street, the whole thing broke anew – the loneliness of the years ahead without her presence, the heartbreak of an empty house, and all the other implications of her death. He was so burdened by this that he looked to the Lord for help. He said, “And just then, this fountain, the Holy Spirit that I had in my heart, broke forth with such great power as I think I had never experienced before, and it was the most joyful moment I had ever known in my life! Oh, how wonderful is the joy of the Holy Spirit! It is an unspeakable glorious thing to have your joy not in things about you, not even in your most dearly loved friends, but to have within you a fountain ever-springing up every day of the year, springing up under all circumstances until everlasting life. (Green, p.350)

C. Reward is reason to rejoice.

I’m going to heaven, and that surely is great news!

Matthew 5:11-12 (NIV) ¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“**great is your reward in heaven**” (repeat) (not earth),

- When you feel mistreated because you’re a Christian
- When falsehoods are spread about you
- When you’re left out socially because you are a Christian

“Great is your reward in heaven!”

“Good news brings great joy.” Like the...

III. Good News of Worship.

A. Communion is a time of joy (**Acts 2:46**).

Acts 2:46 (NIV) ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

When we take communion and think of what Jesus has done for every Christian, joy must be a part of that remembrance. When we think of where we were without Jesus and where we are now - joy must flood our hearts.

B. True fellowship may produce suffering, but not sorrow (**I Peter 4:13**).

I Peter 4:13 (NIV) ¹³But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Paul describes the Church as joy that he has worked so hard to establish.

I Thessalonians 2:17-20 (NIV) ¹⁷But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. ¹⁸For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us. ¹⁹For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? ²⁰Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

Ministry can be the best and the worst -- all because of people — but those who are brought into the Church should be like our children for whom we are willing to suffer sometimes, but gladly, because we love them.

Conclusion: (Little Kittel, p.1300) “The world rejoices at the sorrow of the disciples, thinking it has triumphed by destroying Jesus, but this victory is only for the moment.”

John 16:20 (NIV) ²⁰I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

Joy today is found in the same way when we recognize that Jesus is alive. Some people today live their lives like the Epicureans and do not think about tomorrow.

“By promise the church has already moved on from sorrow to joy. The world’s hostility remains, but this very fact shows that joy cannot be lost.”

John 15:18-19 (NIV) ¹⁸“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

God’s choosing us brings joy! Joy’s perfection rests on its lack of any perceptible ground or reason from the world’s standpoint. In practice, joy is the possibility of prayer, which brings its fulfillment.

John 16:24 (NIV) ²⁴Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

True joy comes from the Holy Spirit. It’s part of what we receive as a Christian (**Galatians 5:22**). “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, etc.” Conversion comes as a result of God’s drawing us to Him and then we decide for ourselves to accept his offer of salvation. Peter tells us how to be saved.

Acts 2:38 (NIV) ³⁸...“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If not today, some day soon, we will hear the words of the Apocalypse in our ears as we say: **Revelation 19:6b-7 (NIV)** ^{6b}...“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Are you ready?