

# JOY TO THE WORLD

*“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people’.” —LUKE 2:10*

The word ‘joy’ is defined primarily as an emotion and is associated with expressions like ‘to rejoice’, ‘to delight’, ‘to gladden’, ‘to enjoy’. In the Christmas story, it is used only once, but over 200 times in all of Scripture.

Shepherds were about the least regarded in Jewish culture, but it was to shepherds the Lord first announced His joy. The glory of the Lord shone around them, and the angel said, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10). Then a great company of heavenly hosts appeared with the angels praising God. The shepherds left their flocks, went to Bethlehem and saw the baby lying in a manger. They were so excited that this was exactly what the angel had told them that they quickly spread the word, and all who heard it were amazed.

But a short while later King Herod ordered the massacre of all baby boys two years old and under. Some of those babies may have been in the direct or extended families of those shepherds or in the family of friends. It’s likely they believed that the baby in the manger had died in the massacre, but for thirty years, Jesus lived under the radar in Nazareth, growing up and learning His father’s profession. In those 30 years, there must have been many times the people in Bethlehem questioned if what the shepherds had told them was true. It was supposed to be something about joy and instead they suffered a massacre.

How do we reconcile the two? Throughout Scripture, joy is both forward and outward looking from the immediate circumstance a person finds themselves in. James writes, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance” (James 1:2-3). In other words, consider it joy when you face trials because from them will come something far deeper and richer. Joy is not in the pain or suffering itself, but in the consequences of them.

When Scripture talks about joy, it is never superficial. For centuries, the Jewish nation had been waiting for the Messiah, and the reason for the joy is that it’s going to be possible for everyone from generation to generation to receive salvation and be reconciled to God. Through Jesus Christ, God reunites with all humanity, and that is both forward and outward looking. It is the ‘Good News’ for a suffering world, and over 2,000 years later, that joy extends to us today.

***PRAYER: Dear Lord, when faced with troubling times, may I draw my strength from You and rejoice in the fact that You are doing something in them. Thank You, Lord.***

***TO REFLECT UPON: In a trying circumstance, am I confident that God is working out something good?***