

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday Dec 13, 2020. "Names: Names Are to be Praise. Joy"**

### **I Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines join us in person. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

### **II Recap.**

We are deep into the Advent season, and getting closer to Christmas. Hopefully we're giving you some insight and specific ways to help you find these Advent themes in your everyday life. So you can grow **hope**, a confident expectation, that the coming of Jesus can bring the world we so desire. Find **peace**. Not just absence of conflict, but repairing what was torn apart. The division, disunity, brokenness, we've experienced especially this past year, can be pushed aside by a peace that unites, and heals. Those services and companion study guides are available for your benefit.

### **III Sunday.**

Sunday we hit our third theme of Advent, and that's joy. And if you joined us in person or virtually, you had to suffer through Kal showing pics of his grandchildren. If you missed those then...you need to check them out. Those kids are adorable.

These Advent themes can be kind of difficult, because we don't either use the actual word, or use it in a way that aligns with how the word was used in scripture. And the word joy is no different. Plus joy is just not a word we use regularly. So, let's begin by trying to drill down a bit in the word joy.

**What does joy mean to you?**

**Do you differentiate joy from happiness? Why and how so?**

**Where do you struggle in how you experience joy?**

The scripture was the classic passage used to tell the Christmas story. So, we understand the tension in using this passage. One, it brings great warmth, and comfort to hear it read. Especially in the voice of Linus from "*A Charlie Brown Christmas*". On the other hand, it's so familiar we miss the shattering effect of it. This was not some warm and fuzzy quaint event. This was an earth shaking, life altering, fulfillment of a hundreds year old prophecy of the coming of the one who would save humanity. So, take a few breaths, clear your mind, feel where you are in life right now, and read this passage as nearly as you can to something you've never heard before. The passage is **Luke 2:8-20**.

**As always, what jumped out to you from this account?  
Did you notice anything new or you had forgotten?  
What did it say to you about this thing called joy?**

Kal said there were three things this passage connected with experiencing joy.

**1. Joy comes out of courage.**

We have to come to terms that a risk free, seeking security, comfort, and familiarity, life rarely brings great moments of celebration. But we are all drawn towards those things that 'feel' comfortable, safe and secure because it makes life 'feel' predictable. And we may avoid situations and choices that place us in new, and what feel like scary situations. My guess is choosing familiarity, we may numb the fear and insecurity, but in doing so we also suppress the potential to experience joy. The shepherds had to take this outrageously bizarre story and tell it to their friends. I'm sure they got a lot of strange looks, but sometimes playing it safe is not the joy creating option.

**What keeps us from stepping out courageously into places we can experience joy?**

**2. Joy often comes as something unexpected.**

Says the shepherds were "*astonished*". Astonishment is born out of an unexpected experience of wonder. This event went beyond ANY expectations. In the stories about Jesus, it says people were amazed at his teaching, and astonished at his miracles. Astonishment rises out of something exceeding our expectations. This is the birthplace of joy. Being courageous puts us in places to experience amazing and astonishing things that will help us to experience true joy. The shepherds were just minding their business...minding their flock. And out of nowhere came this announcement of good news that would bring great joy. You often can't plan joy but you can position yourself for it.

**What is the lure and attraction to wanting life to be predictable?**

**3. Joy must be shared.**

Lastly, joy cannot be experienced alone. You can be happy by yourself. Dinner, a movie, the GIANT bag of Doritos, all can bring happiness. I can ENjoy, be happy, being by myself. But have you ever noticed that it's really difficult to be truly joyful by yourself? To experience true, deep, meaningful joy those experiences have to be shared. Think about some of the most joyful times in your life. The birth of a child, a milestone birthday or anniversary celebration, your favorite team wins it's championship. That feeling of elation, joy is enhanced when you share it with others. The shepherds had to share what they had seen and experienced with others. That's what made the joy stay with them.

**How have you experienced what it means to share joy? How did sharing joy enhance it?**

**IV Challenge.**

Joy is such an interesting theme of Advent, because we rarely use that word in everyday conversation. However it seems to be a very important understanding in scripture since we've seen it two weeks in a row now. The natural outflow of a thriving active relationship with God will bring this thing called joy.

**So, how can you incorporate the above three truths from this passage into your life to help you experience this deep and abiding joy the shepherds felt?**