

## **A God Story...**

### **Joy**

Advent is the four-week season leading up to Christmas. The term "Advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "arrival". It is a time filled with songs, gifts, parties, and joy. It is a season filled with bright colors, twinkling lights, and decorated trees.

This year, our Christmas series is called **A God Story**. Because that's what Christmas is: It's not just a sweet story about a baby in a manger...it is the central, unfolding story of God's love and plan for His creation.

Today, on this third Sunday of Advent, our focus is on Mary, the shepherds in their fields, a message of great joy, and a decision to receive or reject it.

10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

Christmas is a season filled with great peace, hope, and joy. Our songs proclaim, "Joy to the world", lights shine, smiles and anticipation grows for Christmas morning. But, where does that joy come from and how can we receive it today?

When in your life have you felt true, soul level, life breathing, overwhelming joy?

Where did that joy come from? Did you produce it? It was a gift...

### **Longing for joy...**

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. Luke 2:1-5

Roman Oppression

Death by taxation

Peace by force (Pax Romana)

Deep Social and Religious Division

### **Joy Delivered...**

#### **Mary's Joy**

#### Rooted in Identity

46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; Luke 1:46-48

### Revolutionary and Just

49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” Luke 1:49-55

### **The Shepherds Joy**

#### The Proclamation of Joy

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:8-12

#### The Experience of Joy

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. Luke 2:15-20

### **Receiving Joy...**

The angels proclaimed it, but the people received it. Joy is not merely an emotion we generate (cry on demand); it is a reality we receive and respond to.

Proclaimer (Angels)	Recipients (Mary/Shepherds)
<b>Fact:</b> “A Savior is born!”	<b>Faith:</b> “We must go and see this thing.”
<b>Potential:</b> “Good news of great joy...”	<b>Experience:</b> “...they returned, glorifying and praising God.”
<b>Promise:</b> “He has brought down the mighty.”	<b>Witness:</b> “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

### **Embracing God’s Gift...**

The joy of Advent is not about ignoring the darkness in the world—or the darkness in our own lives. Mary knew poverty and danger; the shepherds knew rejection and fear.

1. Acknowledge your need.

2. Act in faith.
3. Proclaim the difference.

**“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”**

## **The Second Mile: *Going Beyond Sunday***

Let's dig deeper together to see how God is calling and equipping each of us to reach the lost.

**Monday** – Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. When have you experienced darkness? When have you experienced true, lasting, Godly joy?

**Tuesday** – God first delivered the promise of Joy. Then, He delivered joy in Jesus. Jesus said He will make our joy complete. How is God's promise of joy sufficient for you today?

**Wednesday** – The angels proclaimed it and we get to receive it. How have you received true joy in your life? How is that obvious to all those around you?

**Thursday** – Mary responded to the promise of joy in faith. The shepherds responded to the delivery of joy by going. How are you responding to the Joy God delivered to you in Jesus?

**Friday** – God delivered joy. Joy must be received and acted on. It is an active choice on your part. Will you choose to receive and live in that joy or will you choose to remain in darkness?