

"All right.

This is typically the Sunday, because this is the last Sunday in 25.

This is typically, I preach a year-end message.

Well, I'm going to do that, but I'm going to come by.

I got one more Christmas message, so I'm just going to roll the two in one.

Okay.

Now, y'all remember what the theme was for this past year, 2025?

Built to Thrive in 25.

The first song they sang after announcements was Made for More, which goes right along with the theme of being built to thrive in 25. Now, you're at the end of the year, you got to look back to see, did I thrive or did I not?

You know what the year was.

I'm not talking about thriving in the physical, I'm talking about thriving in the spiritual. Are you close to the God now than you were a year ago? Do you feel more energized by the Holy Spirit now than you did back in January of this year?

I know every year has ups and downs.

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about, are you thriving spiritually?

Are you growing?

Are you maturing?"

"That's what it's about, okay? That's what we should always be about. So bearing that in mind, to go along with what I want to share with you, one more time this year, we're going to read scripture out of the second chapter of Luke.

I'm going to the latter part of the Christmas story.

The angels have appeared to the shepherds.

The shepherds have come to see the newborn babe.

And I'm going to begin in the 16th verse and read down to the 20th verse. Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse number 16, it says, And they came with haste, this is the shepherds, they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the same, what was told to them concerning this child.

And all they had heard it wondered, that those things which were told to them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them."

“And the part I want you to hold on to is the fact that Mary kept all of these things in her heart.

She kept them.

She held on to them.

Now, you just made it through another Christmas season.

Moms, ladies, I know you're exhausted, because you do most of it.

But Crystal tells me that I'm as surprised to see what everybody opens as they are to see what they open.

I don't know what she wants. Don't have a clue.

And I don't think I'm alone in all of that.

So, you made it.

And being here, and we're in the post-Christmas time right now.

If your tree is still up, I'm guessing it looks a lot different than it did just a few days ago.

That's an under rip.

It's just the tree.

Does it seem to you like the lights?

Don't sparkle quite as bright as it did, you know.

Are you as excited by it now?

I mean, I know you've been looking at it for a month or so, maybe a month and a half, maybe longer.

I don't know.”

“But, you know, it's just a little bit of a let down. You should have, or probably have, eaten all the Christmas dinner leftovers by now.

If you didn't, you're tired of them, and you don't care if they get pissed or not.

But the, it just feels different now, doesn't it?

I mean, as beautiful as this stage is, doesn't it feel a little bit different?

You know, probably next week, when you come in, it won't look like this.

It will be back to the regular setting.

But there's just something about after Christmas, because you, no matter how early you started buying for Christmas, I guarantee, 98% of you went and bought something the week of Christmas.

No matter how early you started, you know, the, oh yeah, or the, oh, it's not enough.

And at our house, I was raised this way. We've done it with our kids. We do it with our grandkids.

You make sure everybody's got the same thing.

Well, this one, he's \$1.98 live.

I got to go get something for \$1.98. It's all going to be easy.

That's, you know, that's it.

So all of that is all said and done”

“The question is, what do we do now?

I mean, we're going to take everything down, Christmas wise.

It's all going to be packed up, you know?

Now, at my house, we put the tree up.

I said, man, it just seems like a month ago, I took this thing back down to the basement. Now, you're going to want me to take it back down to the basement again, you know?

Fortunately, my grandkids that they come to, they make that tower of basement for me.

But what do we do now?

I mean, we had all this excitement for the whole month, and preparing, and getting ready, and wrapping, and getting that just right thing for that one person.

What do we do now?

Well, we got New Year's coming up, but man, I'm always asked, are you gonna stay up till midnight?

I've seen midnight.

I know what it looks like.

I don't know if I will or not.

Most likely not.

Usually I make it till I drop the ball in New York, because there an hour ahead that I can go on a visit.

But what do we do after that?

It's January.”

“It's gonna be cold.

But I mean, it's just ahead.

There's nothing coming up.

So what do we do?

Well, I'm glad you asked, because that's what I want to talk to you about this morning.

That's what I want to share with you this morning.

You know, and it's an old cliché saying, I know that.

But we need to learn to keep the spirit of Christmas year-round.

I'm not talking about the decorations.

I'm not talking about the presents.

I'm not talking about all the decorations. I'm not talking about none of that stuff.

I'm talking about the true spirit of Christmas.

Because what I read to you this morning out of Luke, the shepherds, that is the spirit of Christmas.

The message of the angels to those shepherds was the spirit of Christmas.

And what did Mary do? She kept all those things she heard in her heart.

She held on to them.”

“She held on to them because she had to, because she didn't really understand everything that was happening to her.

Anyway, she just knew this was God's plan. Now, I want to give you about three, four things that I think we need to learn to hold on to, that we need to try to keep. In spite of it not being Christmas, these are the things that were established.

With the announcement of the angels, these are the things that were going to happen, that were going to come, and I think we need to learn to embrace those things. The first thing is we need to learn to be happy. For Jesus, a lot of things I'm unhappy about.

That's my point.

You're looking for happiness.

You're looking for joy in the wrong place.

You're expecting it to come from the outside in.”

“That comes from the inside out, true happiness and true joy comes from the inside out. And that is one of the first things that they begin to tell us about the birth of Jesus, about the fact

that the greatest gift of mankind had come into the world in the 10th verse here of the second chapter. The angel said, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.

That's the first thing he said. I want you all to be happy.

We need to understand that God wants us to be happy. Which I'm just not happy because you're looking for happiness in all the wrong places. Isaiah 61 10 says, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.

In the Lord.

My soul shall be joyful in my God.

Is he, it's a personal Savior.

Is it a personal God?

I've never thought about that.

Well, he is. He is.

God cares about you personally and individually.

And wants you to care about him personally and individually.

He's a joyful in my God.

For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

He has covered me with the robes of righteousness.”

“That was Isaiah's prophecy back in the 61st chapter.

God wants us to be happy.

He truly, truly does want us to be happy.

Then why, then, are so many people you run into miserable and unhappy?

One, because they don't know Jesus.

Number two, because if they know Jesus, they don't believe he wants you to be happy.

Because they learn to listen to what the world's telling them.

The world doesn't want you happy.

You, they make more money off sadness and depression than they do off of happiness.

And in case you haven't noticed it, this world spins and operates on money. I'm not saying money is bad. So don't leave this one saying, man, the world is really down on money.

Money is not a bad thing.

It's a needful thing.

Happiness is not based on how much you have or have not in your bank account.

Money can't buy happiness.

It just can't.

Psalms 5 and 11 says, Let all those that put their trust in thee, in God, rejoice. Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them.

The Lord defends us.”

“Let them all so that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Our joy should be in the Lord.

Our happiness should be based on Jesus, not on what the world says.

Because that is the most that has to come.

Now, we are living in a world filled with unhappiness. We are unhappy every place you go. You watch the news at night, they don't talk about the good things, but they do talk about one good thing and 15 bad things.

It's all negative.

There's no positivity.

You just...

One of my favorite things way back in the day, when they used to have the mall, you know, the indoor mall, one of my favorite things was to sit on the bench and watch people walk by and just move from bench to bench.

It's crystal blue from store to store.

You know, you can tell.

Man, you see a couple walking by, you can tell if they're happy or if they're not happy. You can tell which one of them is in trouble and not in trouble, you know. And usually, the woman's walking in front of the guy, and you knew he'd done something messed up”

“You can tell that with people.

You could see a family coming along, and if the kids were being good, and if the kids were not being good, you could tell.

You could see all that.

And I distinctly remember thinking in my heart and in my mind, I see more unhappy people than I do happy people.

Why is that?

Because they've not embraced the joy of knowing Jesus Christ. They have not accepted the fact that God don't want you to be miserable.

God wants you to be happy.

Now, I understand that you cannot be happy every minute of every day. But, I'm going to go out on a limb here and say, hey, y'all could be a whole lot happier than you are most of the time.

We could.

You have got to make up your mind, and I have worn this illustration out in my ministry, and I know that, but it's still as true as right now as it's ever been.

You've got a glass that's got, it's 12 inches tall, and it's got 6 inches of water in it.

Is it half full or is it half empty?"

"Depends on your perspective now, doesn't it?

You choose to see it half full or half empty. That is your choice.

You need to choose happiness.

Preachers, you don't know what I'm going through.

I don't, but I know who's going to bring you through it.

If you just trust Him, if you depend upon Him, we're getting ready to go into a whole new year.

Everything in 25 is gone.

It's behind us.

Are you going to drag the same misery into 26 that you had in 25?

You're going to drag the same unhappiness into 26 you had in 25?

Are you going to choose to be joyful?

Are you going to choose to smile? Are you going to choose happiness?

Well, and I know you're negative Nellie, and you're Debbie Downer, you're doubting Thomas's.

I know.

I know what you're saying.

You know, it won't last.

I could do it, but it won't last.

So because of that, you're not even going to cry.

What's the same thing that you did?

It's just my life.

Who said that?

You and your enemy.

I'm telling you what the word says.”

“The word says, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.

My soul shall be joyful.

I mean, I'm talking about a happiness that permeates everything, blessedly, and you speak in your soul. You can find happiness. Now, you need to learn to sing in the valley, because you're going to get in the valley.

But you know how you get out of the valley?

You sing.

Well, I don't know any songs. Yes, you do.

And, you know, when I sing, knowing all the words is optional.

It is.

I can fill in a word wherever, because I'm singing.

That's right.

I won't get up here on the stage and do that, but in my truck, when I'm workballed by myself, I'll just sing, and I'll add a word here, or I'll take a word out.

It don't matter.

It is the message in the music. It's what motivates you to do it.

And let me tell you something else.

You're an enemy, and you have just one.

Not the whole world is not against you.

You have one enemy.

You start singing about Jesus, he can't stand it.

He can't stand it.”

“You cannot stay miserable and sing about Jesus at the same time.

You can sing it from your heart.

There is joy in this life.

There is happiness in this life.

You've just got to embrace it and hang on to it.

Quit buying in to the negativities of the world.

One of the things I'm going to teach you is, one of the things I'm going to teach you is, manna showed up in the middle of the night, and they only found it when he got life.

What I'm saying?

Jesus brought light into the darkness in their manna, and the manna was what sustained them.

I cannot change that record.

Joy. That's the first one. All right.

The next thing was it sounded like a prayer.

You know what I'm saying? You know what I'm saying?

You know what I'm saying?

You know what I'm saying? The next thing was, it's found in verse number 14.

It says, glory to God, and on earth, peace. Peace.

Oh, oh my.

We need peace in our lives.

We need calm in the midst of the chaos.

We need peace.

John 16 and 33."

Now, if you have not read the 16th chapter of John and the Hive, you need to go back. You need to read it.

If you just read it, go back and read it again.

You need to know that in the 16th chapter, Jesus is doing most of the talking, and he is talking about the comfort, which is to come, which you have, okay?

John 16 and 33 says this, these things I have spoken unto you, that in me, you might have peace.

Peace will come to you, peace.

In the world, you shall have tribulation.

Amen.

Amen.

But he doesn't stop.

But be of good cheer, the Lord says, I have overcome the world.

I have overcome the world.

So because he overcame, and the overcomer lives within us, we can overcome too.

John 14 and 27 says this, Peace I leave with you.

Not just any peace.

He said, My peace I leave with you.

I give unto you.”

“Not as the world giveeth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Jesus also spoke peace into the storm the disciples were with, and he will do the same thing in your life.

He has the ability to speak calmness and peace into your life. You need to learn.

You need to embrace that.

We spend a lot of energy running around trying to figure things out.

You and I have learned.

You and I am learning.

I don't need to figure everything out.

I need to trust the one who's already got it.

And I'm not telling you it's an easy lesson to learn, because I am that guy that when I was a kid took things apart because I wanted to see how they worked.

I didn't get them all back together, but I got them apart to find out how they worked.

You got to learn to trust the Lord.

And peace like joy and like happiness is a thing that comes from the inside out.

It does not come from the outside out.”

“If you are trying to find your peace in the world, it's not there. Peace has to be something that starts on the inside and works its way out.

And you know how you have peace?

You have to base it on the fact that you know God's got this.

Got what?

Whatever this is in your life.

You realize that the God we serve has never been caught off guard. God has never said these words.

I didn't see that coming.

He's never said it.

I say it a lot.

You say it.

Nothing ever catches God by surprise. So if he knew it was coming, he knows where it's going to.

He knows when it's going. He just needs you to have faith and peace in the midst of it.

We live in a world that can destroy your peace.

Doctors are the world's worst.

I love them, I appreciate them.

Man, they're the world's worst, you know?

Doctors can destroy your peace with one diagnosis.

It's not their fault, they're just telling you what they see, okay?"

"But in my medical history, which is extensive here lately, I have found doctors give you all the worst cases. That way you're not shocked if something like that happens.

They give you places that you don't really want to go, you know?

But that's their job.

We need peace.

That's what the angel said.

You know, he said that there should be peace on the earth.

Peace on earth.

We need peace in the midst of everything going on.

Jesus has and is that peace. When you learn to give God control of your life, and you quit trying to run your own show, and be led by the Spirit of God, we sang about that in one of the songs.

We loved to just trust Him.

This new year, we're going into, I don't know what it holds.

You don't know what it holds.

But I know the one that does.

I know the one that does.

And I can go into the new year having a peace in the midst of all the things I don't know.

You know, my family told me, had the nerve to tell me about me stepping down and everything.”

“said, well, you got to learn how to go to church.

I beg your pardon.

I've been in church 40 some odd years.

I know how to go to church.

They said, no, you don't.

You know how to preach.

But you don't know how to go to church.

You think, I can, I can, I got a choice.

I'm just, you're all stretched out about it. They're, they're really afraid I can't keep my mouth shut.

I don't know why they just think that way.

Baffled. But maybe I won't. Maybe I'll be the guy, say, Amen.

Maybe I'll be this guy that starts this, and y'all just get up and wave back or something, you know.

You know what I've got.

And I can tell you this now, but I never say this about what I'm doing.

I've got peace.

I've got peace.

I don't like it, but I've got peace about it.

I do.

I do.

And that peace, that peace did not come from the outside. I'm telling you.

It came from the inside."

Church, there is peace and calm in the midst of the chaos if you would just be willing to get hold of it and embrace it.

All right, let's move on to the next one.

It's in that same verse, in that same 14th verse.

I know there are peace and goodwill for men.

When it says men, that's a generic term for everybody.

I know. I know without you telling me.

I know.

People get on your nerves.

More so now than at any other point in your life, right?

And the angels are talking about goodwill toward men, even them people that get on your nerves.

You know what them people be?

Just somebody smiling.

Just, I mean, and don't smile and shake your head like that.

Don't say, God loved their heart, because you think that cancels out every negative thing you're going to say about them.

You know? Goodwill toward men. And we lost that, or what?

Jesus, don't go to him.

When Jesus said about us, how we should deal with our other people, he said in John 13, 35, he said, John, this is how everybody is going to know your modest life."

"How did you have love for other people?

Lord, there got to be an easier way.

I'm just telling you what he said.

You have love for other people.

And even them that get on your nerves, It's fascinating to get off the ground.

Yes.

Galatians 6 and 10 says this, as we have therefore opportunity.

Opportunity.

Let us be good.

As we have an opportunity in every place, we just don't see it.

And if we reduce it, we don't see it as opportunity, we see it as obligation.

What do I mean?

If you were here at church this year, out of obligation, you wouldn't get nothing out of this.

You might enjoy singing.

You're not enjoying preaching at all.

I know that.

But if you were here out of obligation, you'll get something. You'll feel something.

You'll smile when you leave, you might even want to come back.

Opportunity.

That's the difference between opportunity and obligation, folks.

We need to serve other people out of opportunity, not out of obligation.

Not out of, well, it's just a Jesus saying, we've got to do it, you know."

"You ever been to a restaurant, and the waitress took it out on you, or the waitress took it out on you, because they don't like their dog? You had them, you know, instead of, may I take your order, it's what you want, or something along those lines.

You know.

You know.

Okay? Opportunity or obligation.

Luke 16, 31 says, as you would that man should do to you, you should do him likewise. Treat other people like you want to be treated. Which is to treat other people like you want to be treated.

You know what we need to do?

We need to slow down and see them.

See them as they are.

Slow down and see them.

Well, there's a lot of people who are just in there.

Do it, because we're in such a time.

We need to slow down and see.

We need to learn to listen.

I talk to people all the time.

I'll ask them, how you doing?

We're in a hurry.

Woo, we're good.

Okay, I'm moving on to the next one.

This is a good will for men."

"Men, if they first go, go get this or get that or that.

No, that's not what you just said.

Treat people like you want to be treated. Embrace them.

What? And how much better would the world be if people would act that way?

Well, preacher, they won't, so there ain't no use. There is. There is.

Oh, there is.

You know who you are accountable for when you stand before the Lord?

You.

You are not responsible for them people that get on your nerves. They're responsible for them.

You're responsible for how you treat them, for what you did, for whether you took the opportunity to do the right thing or just, you know, do the same thing you're best at.

Yes, it takes time.

Well, yeah, you've got to take the time. You've got to put in the effort.

Being the hands and feet of Jesus is easy to say, but sometimes it's hard to admit it.

It's hard.

But if you will learn this, the Holy Spirit is speaking to you.

It's urging you and encouraging you to do this and do that.”

“You've got to understand, sometimes the thought comes in your head to do something, and you argue about it.

Lord, I don't want you to.

Come up with that on your own.

No, because I don't want to do it, it wasn't me.

Maybe we're more of a company than we should be.

Maybe we are.

And maybe we're just not willing to because we don't see these people.

We've already hung a label on them.

We've already classified them.

We've already put them into a category, into a section.

God did not send His Son to die for a selected community.

For the world.

For everybody.

Man, woman, boy, girl, black, white, green, purple.

It doesn't matter.

God loves them all.

Man, that's God.

He didn't just start by loving the people around Him.

He let it go from there.

I say this a lot in weddings.

I've been blessed to do a lot of weddings.

I love them, but I tell them, keep the love and the relationship growing.

Because everything that is alive grows.

They need a living love.

And I tell them this, I tell them this.”

"I said, I know, I get these young couples, and they're just so in love.

I love it.

I say, I know you guys, you're just, you think it can't get any better than it is right now.

And they say, yeah, I know it does.

And I say, if you love each other.

How do I know this?

Remember when I've been married 45 years, and I love her more now than I did when we got married.

And I love her enough to marry her then, okay?

And she loved me.

She has put up with me.

Oh, bless her heart.

She has put up with me for 45 years.

I know y'all think that's easy.

I remember distinctly, when I first met Jesus.

I remember.

I remember distinctly.

I loved him more today than I did the first time I met him.

And when I first met him, he literally changed my life. But do you know why?

Because that love has grown.

That love has matured.

We need to spread the love of Jesus to other people, that they too can know the excitement and the happiness that you know."

"And that's what happens when you have goodwill toward men.

If you spread that love, if you spread that joy, if you spread that happiness, do something to make people smile.

Even if it's just holding the door for them.

Whatever it might be, do something to make people smile.

All right.

Last but not least.

Talk about...

Glorifying and praising God.

Verse number 20, since the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God.

They returned from what?

From saying the cross, count, note.

They don't have done that.

They returned for no scripting.

When they had seen it, Mrs. Shepard, the 17th person, when they had seen it, seen the newborn baby, they may have known abroad the same, what was told to them concerning this child. They went everywhere and talked to everybody that would listen and some that wouldn't listen, and told them, we have seen angels. They told us about a child that was born, the Messiah.

And they told everybody.

And after they told everybody, they returned, they told everybody abroad, they returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.

We need to learn how to praise God.”

“Do you know why God sent His Son to earth in the first place?

Well, yeah, you told us to fulfill prophecy.

Well, that was just a small point.

God's whole goal was to use Jesus to reconcile, to bring back together the relationship between God and man through the Shed-Blood of Jesus Christ.

That's what it was for.

They had been sacrificing animals and rolling sense forward for hundreds of years to make this time for this.

And through Jesus, this joining, this reconciliation was to take place.

There was a separation at this point.

At this point, only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies.

Only the high priest could enter in.

God was going to make it known.

Oh, man.

Let me read you a street.

Let me read 1 Corinthians 6, or 1 Chronicles 16.5.

Great is the Lord, and great be to be praised.

Psalms 145.3 adds to those words and says, His greatness is unsurpassed.”

“Great is the Lord, and great be to be praised, and His greatness is unsurpassed. If you go to the Book of 2 Chronicles, the fifth chapter has two different colored highlighters, and highlight the whole chapter.

Everything in there is huge.

And even in to the sixth chapter, the first verse, and verses five and verses six, highlight it, write notes in the bottom of it. What the second Chronicle says here is huge. He's talking about the dedication of Solomon's temple.

Solomon built the temple that David was not allowed to build. Solomon built it, and it came time to dedicate it and to honor God with it. And they all got together, and everybody began to do the things.

Now, the priests were doing their things.

The Levites were doing their things. And it came to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound. The NIV says to make one voice, giving praise and thanks to the Lord.

Glory to God.

The King James says to make one sound, to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord.”

“For part of praising and glorifying God is being thankful for what God has given you, for what God has blessed you with, and for him being taken care of.

Now, you're going to read the rest of this. You read the rest of this.

When they were all doing what they were supposed to be doing.

The Bible says that then, the house sanctuary was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord. So the priest could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, The Lord has filled the house.

I love the free will, I truly, truly love it.

The best services we have.

When people get out of themselves and just praise the Lord.

They spontaneously stand up, they spontaneously raise their hands.

Now, what else is there to discuss? Just that first of all.

If we ever get away from glorifying and praising God, we just look up the Lord.

That's what it's about.

That's what having church is.

Now, we have this whole idea that you can only have church in the church.

Crazy.

To limit God to this building.

Oh, he's here. Don't misunderstand me.”

“Man, I can't take any place. God shows up in my truck all the time.

He wasn't in Austin when I bought the truck, but there he is.

He wasn't on the list, and that made me buy that truck.

Because, you know, hey, that's Austin.

God shows up in his truck.

God will show up anyplace you'll let him be.

You know what it takes?

Singing, praising, doing a little bit of anything.

This whole glorifying and praising God in the Christmas story, that's just at Christmas?

No.

This will be all year long.

All year long.

Especially when you come together with God's people, to be in one mind, to be on the same page, to be heard and seen and praising the Lord.

It's just that then, that then, the glory of God fell.

The whole place was filled with the Spirit of God.

That's what it's about, church.

When we glorify, and you leave this place, and you take that with you. You don't just set it on the fuse.

Oh, it'll be there when you come back.

You know, God is just not a once a week kind of guy.”

“He is seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

You can praise God at three in the afternoon or at three in the morning, and God will show up.

Glorifying and praising God. Four things.

Four things.

I'm quoting her here.

Four things.

All tied to Christ.

But all is spiritual.

The same amount of days in it could kill me at that.

I think it's probably true. We're gonna say it's not.

Nobody knows it is.

Same amount of days.

Are there obligations, or are there obligations?

There's one or the other.

There's one or the other.

And I know so many folks that think, well, there are obligations.

I got to get up and go to work. Okay.

Because the Lord here is up some of the day.

We have six Saturdays on something every week.

Yeah, it's a good time.

Okay, you feel the obligation to get up and go to work? Get up and go to work.

Help somebody throughout the day.

Smile at them.

Put positive reinforcement, put positive encouragement.

Be that light in the darkness.

Take the glory of Christmas, Lincoln.

Take the peace of Christmas.”

“the goodwill toward all men, you know. Not just the ones you like, even the ones you don't like.”

Stand with me