

## THE GIFT OF JOY FOR YOU

Luke 2:10

If you could have one wish this Christmas, what would you wish for?

Some people would say, "I'd like a lot of money," which is really not a bad wish, because if you have a lot of money you can help a lot of people, right? You can be generous, and you can enjoy the blessings, and money buys time and creates options. It's not a bad thing, but we know money doesn't buy happiness. So, it's not the best wish, but it's not a bad wish.

Maybe you'd say, "I wish for a spouse. I wish to be married."

Some people say, "Well, I would wish for beauty, for health, or for fame."

It's easy to write off joy as something that's just not possible for our lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 *"Always be joyful."*

Is that really possible, joy in this world?

Does this mean I have to pretend everything is ok?

Does this mean I have to pretend that I don't have a hurt, that I don't have a loss?"

Christmas turns up the volume on everything.

- The bad that shouldn't have happened .

We all have to admit that a lot of the bad things that happen in our lives, we bring them on ourselves.

There are bad things that happen to us and in this world that just shouldn't happen.

We didn't bring it on ourselves, no one deserved it, that person was innocent.

Because of that we wonder, Can joy really happen in this world?

- The good that doesn't happen.

The good things that we want to happen that don't happen in our lives.

The dream that we've had that doesn't seem to be able to come true.

The heart that we hope to change in someone else that never seems to change.

The prayer that we pray that doesn't seem to get answered, at least not the way we wanted it to get answered.

If joy is going to work you can't wait for perfect circumstances because we do not live in a world of perfect circumstances.

Have you ever been really down and the phone rings and you pick it up and it's some good news?

You've just seen the power that good news has to bring joy into our lives.

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

Not just for the shepherds but for all, this message of good news.

The word “gospel” just means good news.

The good news is a story of what Jesus came to do.

The good news is the fact that Jesus Christ came to this earth to tell us that God loves us.

The good news is that God offers forgiveness for the wrong things we’ve done and a new sense of direction in our lives.

The good news is that God cares for the struggles you’re going through and can also make a difference in the direction of your life.

If there's a country on this earth where people should be filled with joy, one would certainly think it would be the United States of America, but most current polls show that only about 35% of Americans are very happy. Depression affects more than 19% of American adults, anxiety disorders affect 40 million, or 18% of the population. In 2016, a federal data analysis found that suicide rates in America had surged to their highest level in 30 years, rising in that period by 64% among women and 43% among men, and a worldwide study of 90,000 people showed that the 10 richest countries in the world also had the highest rates of depression. The United States had the second highest rate, exceeded only by France. What this tells us is that joy and happiness may not necessarily be dependent on your circumstances. Those who have the most reasons to be joyful often turn out to be the most often depressed.

Two profound statements that come to us from the Bible about joy may surprise you.

- God experiences joy.

Isaiah 62:5 says: “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.” Isaiah 62:5

The Bible actually teaches us that God enjoys us. He looks down over humanity and enjoys us, some of us more than others, but He enjoys us.

Isaiah 65:19 says: “I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people.”

Zephaniah 3:17 says: “The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”

God is a joyful person, and He rejoices in us. He likes us. So many have been brought up in a culture where God is viewed as a God of judgment, stern and angry all of the time, but we need to listen to the Word of God.

- God wants you to experience joy.

He's a joyful God, and He wants His creatures to be joyful.

What God desires for us, He provides for us.

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of My joy within them.” John 17:13

God wants His joy to be our joy. He wants the experience of joy that He has in heaven to be our experience of joy here on this earth.

The Bible describes that as His own joy. The Bible tells us that God not only wants you to be joyful, God commands you to be joyful. Here’s what it says in Philippians 4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice!”

But you just can't walk up to somebody and say, “Start being joyful.” You can't just command joy.

We're supposed to be in charge of our attitudes. When you read the New Testament, you discover that the ministry of Jesus in His lifetime here on earth was always surrounded by joy. Jesus was a joyful person, and wherever He went He brought joy. When He was born, that was the promise, wasn't it? That He would bring joy.

During the Christmas season we sing, “Joy to the world, the Lord has come.”

In John 2, Jesus went to a wedding to perform a miracle that became one of the sign miracles in the book of John so that those who saw the miracle would believe that He was indeed the Son of God.

Jesus was involved in the celebration of a young couple making their vows to one another. When they ran out of wine, Jesus took care of the problem. He was always around where joy was happening.

He has always been around, solving problems and creating great joy for Christians.

Joy is the atmosphere in which our Christian lives are supposed to be lived.

Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica, “Rejoice always.”

Joy is present in every major event that we experience as believers.

The day you were saved was a happy day.

“Oh happy day! When Jesus was washed my sins away.”

The joy of salvation is the joy of realizing you're not guilty anymore, that you've been forgiven, that God has given you the gift of eternal life and you're going to spend eternity with Him.

The Bible says that when a person is saved, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10

Every time you hear somebody give their testimony of salvation, we should all rejoice in that because that's a moment of great joy.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for delivering a young girl from demon possession and preaching the gospel. They were beaten and thrown into the deepest cell in the prison.

“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Acts 16:25

The kind of joy that can make you happy in jail at midnight with your back bleeding and your life in danger, that's the kind of joy I want. I want that kind of joy.

You don't rejoice in your load, but you can rejoice in our Lord.

Christian joy is so incredible that it even stays with us when we're dying. I've been with Christian people through the process of death and see the smile on their face. Some of them have told me they've seen Jesus in the process, and they wouldn't come back here for anything.

When Paul was getting ready to finish his journey, he said in Acts chapter 20, "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. None of these things move me, I don't even count my life dear to myself, so that I can finish my race with joy." Acts 20:22-24 Paul had joy all the way to the end.

In chapter 15 of the book of John, Jesus talked about the source of joy.

### **1. Jesus Is The Source Of Joy.**

Joy comes from Jesus. Listen to His words in John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, that your joy might be full."

Jesus says, "I want your joy to be the result of my joy."

This joy is the result of letting Christ live His life through you so that you become what He is.

Peter called it a joy that is "inexpressible and full of glory."

"And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1:8

This joy isn't dependent on us. It's dependent on Him, and if we will trust Him, He will produce that joy in our hearts. The characteristic of this joy is that it is full joy.

It is not temporary and incomplete. It is not an almost joy or a sometimes joy. This is an everyday, 100% complete joy.

If you're looking for joy outside of Jesus, you're going to be disappointed. Jesus is always ready for you to come to Him for joy.

If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, you've got to let Jesus come into your heart and take over your heart.

### **2. Jesus' Joy Is A Continual Joy.**

Have you ever discovered how easy it is for your happiness today to become sadness tomorrow?

Your sweetness in the morning can turn into bitterness at night.

The joy of Christ is a continual, never-ending, absolutely constant, lasting joy. This joy is not hinged on happenings. It's perfected in a Person.

At one of the lowest times in the lives of Jesus' disciples, the days just before He was taken away from them to go to the cross, in the midst of their sorrow and anxiety, Jesus comforted His disciples with these words. John 16:22 "For now you have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you."

You have to submit your life totally to the Spirit of God.

Joy is the fruit of the Spirit, and when you're filled with the Spirit of God, you get that fruit. You have to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and then the Spirit of God comes to live within your heart. If you want that joy to be full and complete, you have to say to the Lord Jesus and to the Holy Spirit, "Here's my life. Do with it as You please."

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."* Galatians 5:22

The Bible is God's handbook for joy.

It is the book that God gave us so that we would know how to live the Christian life. You'll find joy everywhere in this book.

If you want really to have joy cultivated in your life, you have to share your life with others. You're not going to be happy by yourself. God never intended you to be happy by yourself. He created the church so that we could be together.

It is hard to live the Christian life without each other. Look at all the scary mess we're in right now in this country. Look at all the craziness that's going on. The only kind of sanity you may ever feel is when you come to church on Sunday. Then you have to go back into that mixed-up world. You need other people in your life.

Christianity is joyful. One of the great things people tell me when they visit our church is that there is so much joy in our church. Isn't that what should be here? If you've got Jesus, joy is contagious, and to catch the infection, you have to expose yourself to the virus and become part of the blessed epidemic.

If you want to be joyful, hang out with joyful people.

Find those who have genuine, authentic, complete joy.

### **3. Jesus' Joy Is a reason For Celebration.**

*"When the angel had left them and went into heaven the shepherds said to one another 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about.'" Luke 2:15*

*"When they'd seen Him (the baby Jesus) they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child." Luke 2:17*

Some of you are going through difficult days, real struggles, yet your lives are filled with joy.

*"Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." Psalm 126:5*