

The Joy of Christmas
Luke 1:46-55

ETS: Mary was filled with joy as she contemplated
God's mission for her

ESS: Being used by God brings joy

OSS: I want people to be filled with joy—even in the
midst of trials

PQ: Is there joy in your life?

UW: Joy

ME

Christmas time! I love Christmastime.

- I like the old play dough movies of **Rudolph**, the old cartoons of **Frosty the Snowman**.
- I do enjoy sipping **hot chocolate** at this time of the year.
 - Laura burns down a forest this time of the year-and I admit that on a cold night I enjoy a nice fire.
 - I am glad we now have a **GAS FIREPLACE**—but I'm afraid to see the gas bill for this month!

Christmas—for many—is a time of **JOY**

- Time of **escape** from the problems of the world (even if for a few hours)
- Time of **joy** as you watch the **light in children** and **grandchildren** as they open up their gifts.

REALITY: In all our “happy” songs at Christmas we tend to ignore the pain.

- REASON: Maybe for many, Christmas is a time to try to ESCAPE pain—even if only for a day
- REALITY: For many, Christmas IS a time of pain

Even though Christmas is a time of JOY and Happiness, it can be a **painful** time for many

- Christmas of **loneliness**
 - **Christmas** without a loved one at the table due to death, distance or disease
- Christmas of struggle due to **financial difficulty**

REALITY: There is a lot of uncertainty in our world!

- **Financial uncertainty** about rising gas and food prices
- **Employment uncertainty** about whether a person can keep their job
- **Health uncertainty**—is this disease going to get the best of me?

- **Relationship** uncertainty—is my marriage going to make it?

Can you have JOY in the midst of PAIN?

Can you have JOY in the midst of FEAR?

Can you have JOY in the midst of UNCERTAINTY?

Can you ENJOY Christmas despite CONCERNS and FEARS?

GOD

Turn to Luke 1

Angel Gabriel comes to virgin, Jewish teenager named Mary

- In **Luke 1:28-31**: “And the angel came to her and said, “Rejoice, **favored** woman! The Lord is with you. But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. 30 Then the angel told her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.”

God had shown **Favor** (e.g. Grace) to Mary!

- A backwater, poor teenager had been shown grace by God!

We **won't rehash** last week, but needless to say this ANNOUNCEMENT fills Mary with **CONFUSION**, but she **ACCEPTS** the news-**“See, I am the Lord’s servant...May it happen to me as you have said.”** (V. 38)

REMINDER

**GOD’S ACTONS DON’T ALWAYS MAKE SENSE,
BUT HIS SERVANTS SERVE HIM**

God **DOESN’T CALL** us to **ACT** in **FAITH** without giving us evidence

- Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth was pregnant in her old age
- Mary takes off to see Elizabeth (who is 6 months along)

Mary and Elizabeth talk about what God is doing and Mary breaks out into a **song of praise**:

Skip down to **Luke 1:46-47 (HCSB)** **“And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,**

- Do you think Mary is filled with Joy?

What is Joy?

The **dictionary** defines “Joy” as *A lively emotion of happiness; gladness or as Anything that causes delight.*

- Mary clearly is filled with an “**emotion of happiness**”!

The **definition** of **joy** is often tied in with **emotion**.

- **Joy** is certainly a part of the **Christmas** story!
 - **Shepherds = JOY** The shepherds experienced an **emotional high** on that night.
 - Wouldn't you if a group of angels appeared to you, especially while you where on the outskirts of town tending some fat, smelly sheep who are about as smart as a fence post? Yes, they would be very happy, filled with Joy, after all their Savior had been born.
 - **Wisemen = JOY.** Yes, Matthew tells us in Matthew 2:10 that the Magi, or Wisemen, were **overjoyed** when the star stopped over the house where Jesus was.
 - Wouldn't you be happy after traveling for months, maybe a year, over deserts, through a different country and a different culture, riding a lumpy camel following a star on a hunch that you are

going to find the King of the Jews? I'd be happy too to finally get there.

IS joy *ONLY* an “emotion of happiness”?

- *If that is the case* the “**Good tidings of great joy**” that the angels brought to the shepherds and Mary brought had some **problems**.
 - The **Jews** were still an **oppressed** people after
 - The Birth of Jesus
 - The Death of Jesus
 - **Mary’s circumstances** did not change after Jesus’ birth!
 - We know that they were **poor** by the **sacrifice** that they brought to the temple.
 - We know that Joseph was a **carpenter**.
 - Carpentry was not an occupation of the learned. It was a blue-collar job that was in the realm of the poor.
 - **Mary** had to **watch** as her son-the one the angel told her was the Son of God-was **crucified** on a cross!

The Joy of Christmas is not found in a **fleeting emotional high** or is to be found in **circumstances**.
Joy is found...

- **Not in Unbelief** -- **Voltaire** was an outspoken atheist. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."
- **Not in Pleasure** -- **Lord Byron** lived a life of pleasure if anyone did. He wrote: "The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone."
- **Not in Money** -- **Jay Gould**, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."
- **Not in Position and Fame** -- **Lord Beaconsfield** enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: "Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret."
- **Not in Military Glory** -- **Alexander the Great** conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept in his tent, before he said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

If Joy is not simply emotional, what is the Joy of Christmas?

- **How can you have joy even in the middle of financial struggle!**
- **How can you have joy even in the midst of a bad medical diagnosis!**
- **How can you have joy without that loved one or spouse?**

- How can you find joy when you feel **lonely and isolated**?

You can have joy the same way Mary found joy in the midst of her...

- **Confusion** about what was happening
- **Fear** of how her **family** would react
- **Fear** about how **Joseph** would respond
- **Concern** about raising the Son of God!

How did Mary find JOY in the midst of fear, confusion and concern?

Mary's Joy was rooted in WHO her Son was:

Luke 1:31 (HCSB) ³¹ Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call His name Jesus.

The angel **predicted** 5 *future* things about Mary's Son.

Luke 1:32 (HCSB)

1. "He will be **great** and
2. [He] will be called the **Son of the Most High**,
 - a. The fact that her Baby was to be called the "Son of the Most High" pointed to His **equality** with **Yahweh**.
 - i. In Jewish thought a **son** was a "**carbon copy**" of his father,

1. The phrase “**son of**” was often used to refer to one who **possessed** his “**father’s**” **qualities**
- b. Jesus would later say “**You’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father**”
3. **The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.**
 - a. Jesus, as David’s descendant, will sit on David’s throne when He **reigns** in the **Millennium**-the 1,000 years of peace on this earth!
 - i. **Spiritually**, this is **fulfilled**, but **physically** there will be a day when Jesus will rule and reign on the earth!
4. **He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,**
 - a. Jesus, as David’s descendant, will sit on David’s throne over His people when He **reigns** in the **Millennium**-the 1,000 years of peace on this earth!
5. **His kingdom will have no end.**
 - a. Mary’s Son was not going to be like an earthly king, but He was to have **eternal reign**-therefore, He was God come to the earth!

Mary has been told she is going to have the Son of God!

- *Mary responds with these words of **praise**:*

Luke 1:46-47 (HCSB) “And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,

- Do you think Mary is filled with Joy? YESS!!!

Find Joy in Your Future Hope!

JOY *NOT* based on immediate circumstances but a **future hope**—v. 32

1. “He will be great and
2. [He] will be called the Son of the Most High,
3. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.
4. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,
5. His kingdom will have no end.

Having JOY during Christmas is not **ROTED** in a **fleeting emotion** you may feel on Christmas when...

- Family is gathered
- You get the newest widget
- The fun in the snow

What Mary says shows that she recognized that JOY was **deeper** than the **temporary**...

Luke 1:46–47 (HCSB) “And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in **God my Savior**,

Mary recognized that she was a **sinner!**

- Only **Sinners** need a **Savior!**

Mary’s Joy was based **not just** on being **chosen** as the **future mother** of the **Son of God**

- Mary’s joy was based in the fact that a “**Savior**” was being given!
 - What was Mary going to be saved from?
Her **sins!**
 - Mary knew the **biggest problem** was “**sin**”

Find JOY in Your Redemption from Sin

Mary did not conceive of how her Son would deliver her from her sins, but she knew He would.

Mary’s JOY was rooted NOT ONLY in what God would do, but **what God HAD DONE!**

Luke 1: 48: “because He has looked with **favor** on the humble condition of His slave.”

- You can have JOY b/c God has look on you with **favor!**

IF you are “**saved**” – You are **CHOSEN** by God!

- If you are “**saved**”, you are experiencing God’s favor!
 - You are **CHOSEN, REDEEMED, HOLY, etc.**
 - NOT b/c of **anything you have done!**
 - NOT b/c of **who you are!**
 - Mary called herself “**His Slave**”
 - Mary was a poor, backwater teenager!

You can say the same things Mary said **Luke 1:49**:
....because the Mighty One has done great things for me,

- The **Mighty One** (GOD) has done a **great thing** for you-
 - He **chose** you
 - He **Sent His Son** for you
 - He **showed** you **love** before you loved Him
 - He **sacrificed** for you!

You can say the same things Mary said **Luke 1:50**
“His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear Him.”

- You and I are 20 generations removed from Mary, but God has shown YOU mercy!
 - **Mercy: Not getting what you deserve!**
 - You and I deserve **separation** from God in Hell; God has shown you and I “Mercy”!

Find Joy in Coming Justice

Do you know what the **abbreviation: SJW**? (Social Justice Warrior)

- People are looking for Justice

People feel that the RICH and POWERFUL are oppressing us-and, in some cases, they are!

- In North Korea, the trusted elite can surf the Internet with relative freedom while the masses are kept inside the national *intranet*, painstakingly sealed off from the outside world, meticulously surveilled

Mary, realized that the coming Savior, would **bring Justice**

- Mary saw that the Justice is a done deal with the coming Savior

With the coming of the Savior, look at all Mary say
God Has (“He Has”) done...

Luke 1:51-53 ⁵¹ **He has** done a mighty deed with His arm;

- **He has** scattered the **proud** because of the thoughts of their hearts;
- ⁵² **He has toppled** the **mighty** from their **thrones** and exalted the lowly.
- ⁵³ [**He has**] sent the **rich** away empty.

How has God done these things?

- NOT through **military conquest**
- NOT through **political** maneuvering
- NOT through **social welfare** programs
- NOT through **socialism**

God did this by **sending His Son** to be the **Savior!**

- Jesus **defeated** the **ultimate oppression: SIN!**

NOW, that SIN has been DEFEATED, Jesus will again return to exact JUSTICE!

Christ-followers have JOY b/c we know that the day is coming when what Mary foresaw will happen.

Joy Because God Keeps His Promises

Mary continues: **Luke 1:54-55** “⁵⁴ **He has helped His servant Israel, mindful of His mercy,** ⁵⁵ **just as He spoke to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever.”** (E.g., He has kept His promises)

After thousands of years of waiting, after 400 years of silence, God finally spoke!

- God was going to fulfill His promise

You can Have Joy knowing that God keeps His Promises

- To **supply** all your needs
- To **never leave** you or forsake you
- To give **strength** to the weary
- To **fight** for you
- To set you **free** from the **oppression** of sin
- To **deliver** you from the **sin and death**
- To **lead** you
- To give you **wisdom**
- To **forgive** you of your sins when you **confess** them to Him
- To **hear you** when you **pray in confession**
- To **give you eternal life**
- To **bless** you when you **honor Him**
- To **be with you** wherever you go

- To give you what you **ask** in prayer when you are abiding in Him
- To never **blot** out your name from **the Book of Life**
- To **work** in **all things** for the **good**
- To give **good gifts** to those who ask Him

WHAT is the JOY of Christmas?

Joy is Not Based on Circumstances

Paul, stresses the **paradox** that this joy can be **experienced** in the midst of **temporal afflictions**.

- Why?
 - Afflictions viewed as **transitory** and thus unable to dampen the joy of the believer,
 - Afflictions suggest the **imminent fulfillment** of the believers' **hopes** and thus heighten rather than diminish the mood of exultation.
 - **Romans 5:3** “**Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance**”
 - Did you know that Paul’s Letter to the **Philippians**, written under circumstances of **severe suffering**, is

also the most joyous of all his
Letters!

The **joy of Christmas** can be experienced even when you feel that you are on the **outside**.

- **Mary** was a humble, poor, teenage girl in the backwaters of Israel!

YOU can joy even when you have no clue what a **vector** is or can't **remember** why you are **even here** in the first place!

- You can even have joy when you get **dumped--** even when you get dumped big time!

How is that possible?

- Should I always have a plastic smile on my face!
- Be Mr. Happy-faced Christian all the time?!
 - No. **Jesus wept, Paul suffered**, I doubt that that **seventy-mile** journey was **not all yippee Skippy** for **Mary and Joseph**.
 - You can have **the joy of Christmas** even in the midst of tears, of grief, of pain.
 - Why? **Because the joy of Christmas is much more than**

emotions or circumstances. Those things are temporary.

Joy is Based on the eternal.

A person who has the Joy of Christmas has a joy that endures.

- He/she has the assurance that no matter what happens **God is in control.**
- Remember what Jesus told his disciples when He was trying to explain to them that He was going to die shortly.
 - He said: **John 14:27** “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”
 - Since **Jesus** came from **heaven** He knew what he was talking about!

You can have the Joy of Christmas despite circumstances and emotions because you can have the underlying joy in knowing that what you are doing for God has eternal rewards.

- You can have the joy of Christmas because God is always in control,
- You can have the Joy of Christmas because on a day some 2,000 years ago Jesus came to earth.

WE

PQ: Do you have the JOY of Christmas?

Twass The Night Before Jesus Came/Twass the night
before Jesus came and all through the house/Not a
creature was praying, not one in the house. Their
Bibles were lain on the shelf without care/In hopes
that Jesus would not come there. The children were
dressing to crawl into bed, Not once ever kneeling or
bowing a head. And Mom in her rocker with baby on
her lap Was watching the Late Show while I took a
nap. When out of the East there arose such a clatter, I
sprang to my feet to see what was the matter. Away
to the window I flew like a flash/Tore open the
shutters and threw up the sash! When what to my
wondering eyes should appear But angels
proclaiming that Jesus was here. With a light like the
sun sending forth a bright ray I knew in a moment
this must be THE DAY!

The light of His face made me cover my head/It was
Jesus returning just like He said And though I
possessed worldly wisdom and wealth, I cried when I
saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life which He held in his hand, Was
written the name of every saved man. He spoke not a
word as he searched for my name; When He said,
"It's not here" my head hung in shame. The people

whose names had been written with love, He gathered to take to His Father above. With those who were ready He rose without a sound While all the rest of us were left standing around. I fell to my knees, but it was too late; I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate. I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight; Oh, if only I had been ready tonight. In the words of this poem the meaning is clear; The coming of Jesus is drawing near. There's only one life and when comes the last call, We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

PQ: Do you have the JOY of Christmas?

- Is your Joy built only on your circumstances?
- Is your Joy built only on how you feel?
- Is your Joy built only on Social Justice?

In all these cases-and others-your joy comes and goes!

1. You don't have a deep, abiding, eternal joy!
 - You don't know if you really have a future!

The only way to experience the JOY of Christmas is to recognize like Mary: **My God and My Savior!**

1. You are NOT God
2. You need a Savior b/c you are a sinner

3. Humble yourself before God and ask for forgiveness

PQ: Do you have the JOY of Christmas?