

Luke 2:8-12

Today is the third Sunday of Advent, as you can see by the candles lit on the wreath. So far, we have examined the first candle representing hope and the second candle representing peace. Today we come to the third candle on the wreath. Each week we are taking the first four fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 “... **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience ...**” and working backwards. The third is joy. The traditional ★ reading is from Philippians 4:4, “**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**”

This morning we will examine a number of Scriptures relating to Christmas and joy; we ★ will begin with Luke 2, verses 8 to 12. “**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.’”**

★ One of the things people love about Christmas is that it is meant to be a truly joyful season of anticipation. All season long we celebrate with music and song and lights and decorations. We celebrate by getting together with family and friends and by exchanging gifts. For believers it is a joyful time of year as we celebrate the birth of Christ and with great anticipation await His return.

However, the world works hard to take the joy out of Christmas. If you come right down to it, the real joy at Christmas does not come from the lights and the decorations and the music and presents but from the meaning of Christmas. The joy the world promotes is fleeting and the Christmas season can be depressing when the joy the world pushes does not bring true joy and rings empty. How can one find lasting joy?

At the heart of Christmas is the astoundingly good news that Jesus Christ was born as a Savior into this world. From beginning to end the Christmas story is punctuated with various outbursts and moments of joy and they all center around the birth of Christ. You cannot get away from it. You cannot get around it. You cannot spell Christmas without Christ, and you cannot enter into the true joy of the season without Jesus. Jesus is the only source of lasting joy.

★ This morning we will explore three truths about joy at Christmas. **First**, Jesus brings the joy of salvation. **Second**, joy in Jesus leads to proclamation. **Third**, joy in Jesus leads to praise. All three of these truths are found right in the very Scripture passages which tell us the Christmas story, so all three of these truths together capture the true meaning of joy at Christmas.

★ Pray

★ Joy In Jesus Brings Salvation

I want to begin with Jesus bringing the joy of salvation. Now Jesus brings joy in many areas of life, but the joy that is especially associated with Christ's birth is the joy of salvation. We already saw last week that Jesus' very name means salvation and this week I want us to see the connection that the Bible makes between salvation and joy.

For example, we read David's prayer to the Lord found in Psalm 51 David cries ★ out to God, ⁹ "Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² **Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.**" (Psalm 51:9-12) Understand that David wrote this Psalm after committing adultery with Bathsheba. David had sinned greatly against God, but he still understood the connection that when he repented God would restore his joy of salvation. Even though David sinned, just as Samuel said to Saul he was being



removed from the throne and, “The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart...” (1 Samuel 13:14) David was a man who sought the heart of God. David was convicted by his sin, repented, asked God for His forgiveness and God restored to him the joy of his salvation.

Another place we see the connection between salvation and joy is when Isaiah was prophesying about the second coming of Christ, yes, I said second coming in ★chapter 12, ² “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.” ³ **With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**” Can you see the image in your mind Christ the Living water bringing joy at His second coming? This fits right in with the Advent season; celebrating His birth and waiting for the King’s return.

Last week we looked at Isaiah 11 where we saw that when Christ returns, he will bring peace on earth, a peace that includes not only peace among the nations but extends even to nature and the animal kingdom. Now Isaiah follows that up in chapter 12 by speaking of God’s salvation and the joy that accompanies His salvation.

There is no true joy without salvation and there is no true salvation that does not give joy. The two go together, and they especially go together in those Scriptures which tells us the Christmas story. For example, we read in the gospel of Luke how when Mary was pregnant with Jesus, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was ★also pregnant at this time with John the Baptist. We read in Luke, ³⁹ “In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby

in my womb **leaped for joy.** ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” (Luke 1:39-45) I love this scene. Mary enters the house, and John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb, starts jumping for joy! Why? Because as Elizabeth put it, Mary was the “**mother of my Lord**”! Jesus is Lord, Mary was Jesus’ mother and John was in close proximity with Jesus who had come to bring salvation for his people. So, John begins jumping with joy in his mother’s womb. John is filled with the Spirit and has joy, Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit, so she too, experienced great joy. This joy was only possible because they were filled with God’s Spirit. Here you have two persons of the Trinity in this house; God’s Spirit filled John and Elizabeth and the Son of God growing in Mary’s womb. Amazing! Even in the womb John by the Holy Spirit is filled with joy because the Messiah, the Christ has come.

Another great example of Jesus bringing the joy of salvation is the wise men or Magi found in the gospel of Matthew. They traveled a great distance just to see the Messiah and to worship him. They had seen his star in the east, but they did not know exactly where the Christ child was to be born, so they followed the star to Jerusalem and asked King Herod for additional information. Reading Matthew 2, verses 8 to 10, King  Herod ⁸ “**sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.**” ⁹ After  **listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.** ¹⁰ **When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.**” Like the Shepherds, the Magi rejoiced to find the place where Jesus was born. Why? Because Jesus was the Messiah who had come to bring salvation to His people.

Salvation and joy belong together, and joy and Christmas belong together, because Jesus is who Christmas is about and brings joy to all who open their heart to

Him, especially the joy of salvation. So that brings to the end of the first point; Jesus brings the joy of salvation.

★ Joy In Jesus Leads To Proclamation

Secondly, joy in Jesus leads to proclamation. Jesus brings the joy of salvation, and that joy leads us to share the good news of Jesus with others. We find this truth demonstrated for us in the story of the angels and the shepherds. For example, as we read in Luke 2, there were shepherds living out in the fields near Bethlehem, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of ★ the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them ¹⁰ “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.” Notice the news about Jesus’ birth is not only news, it is good news! It is not only good news it is good news of joy! It is not only good news of joy; it is good news of great joy! It is not only good news of great joy; it is good news of great joy for all the people! But how will all the people know about this good news of great joy unless we share it with them?

We share good news with each other all the time. When something good happens, we talk about it with our friends at work or at school. We may post it on Facebook. When the good news is the birth of a baby, we especially share it with others, do we not? We take pictures and send out birth announcements. We are filled with joy at the birth of a child, and that joy naturally leads to proclamation. We want everyone to know and share in our joy.

Well, if we tell everyone about the birth of our own babies, how much more should we proclaim the birth of God’s Son! Good news is for sharing, and there is no better news than the news the angels shared with the shepherds that first Christmas Eve,

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

(Luke 2:11) What did the shepherds do after they received this good news of great joy that

★ was for all the people? Let’s find out! Picking up the story in Luke 2:15, “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.**” When the shepherds heard this good news of great joy that was for all the people, first they checked it out for themselves and found everything just as the angel had told them. After they had checked it out for themselves, what did they do? They spread the word to others. Why? Because good news is for sharing! This was good news of great joy for all the people, and it would have been wrong for them to keep it to themselves. Joy leads to proclamation. We cannot be private Christians; God calls us to share the good news and the joy of our salvation.

★ Joy In Jesus Leads To Praise

We have examined **Jesus brings joy of salvation** and **joy in Jesus leads to proclamation** and now will finish with **joy in Jesus leads to praise**. We find having joy in Jesus leads to praise within two places in the Christmas story. The first example is Mary after she hears the words of prophecy from Elizabeth that we looked at earlier. Mary was filled with joy and wonder as her cousin Elizabeth spoke words of blessing and favor over her and the child she carried in her womb. Her joy could not be contained, so she burst out in a song of praise. Mary’s song of praise begins in Luke

★ 1:46, “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;

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.”

We often call this “Mary’s Song” or “The Magnificat,” as Mary magnifies or glorifies the Lord for choosing her to be the mother of Jesus. Notice that this joy still has to do with salvation. Mary rejoices in God her Savior. She is filled with joy at God’s goodness to her, and her joy bubbles over into praise. Is this how you responded at your salvation? Do you sing from the depths of your soul like Mary, “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. ...⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”? These are questions you should consider.

We find this same pattern with the shepherds when they returned from sharing the  good news of Jesus with the people in the town. Reading from Luke 2:20, “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. Does this not

★ foreshadow the Great Commission given by Jesus, ¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of **all** nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe **all** that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20) We are living in the “**end of the age**” or end times and Jesus calls all believers to make disciples and teach the gospel. How many is all? Right, everyone – are you obedient to Jesus? Joy leads to proclamation, so they went out and spread the word about Jesus and his birth. But joy also leads to praise, and so they returned glorifying and praising God. God chose them to be eyewitnesses to the birth of Christ, and they would never forget the things they had heard and seen that night, which were just as they had been told. You have been told, let your joy lead to proclamation and praise.


Let me close by tying these together. The third Advent candle of Joy reminds ★ three important aspects of Christmas; **First**, Jesus brings the joy of salvation. **Second**, joy in Jesus leads to proclamation. **Third**, joy in Jesus leads to praise. These three aspects of joy at Christ should be taken by each person as application in their own lives to be lived out praising Jesus. Will you heed your Lord’s call?

If you do not know and experience joy in your salvation in Christ then it is time to ask, “Why”?

Do you know the joy of being restored to right relationship with God through Christ the Savior? The message that the angel gave to the shepherds that first Christmas night is just as applicable to you two thousand years later, right here, right now, as Luke ★ 2:11 says, “For unto you is born **this day** in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” God is saying today, not tomorrow nor yesterday, this day live for Christ!

There is no true joy without salvation, and there is no true salvation without joy. Jesus is the reason for the season, and if you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, then you are missing out on the true joy of Christmas.

Secondly, joy in Jesus leads to proclamation. If you do know Jesus as your Savior, then you need to spread the word! How many people have you talked to about Jesus this Christmas season? You do not need to be a trained theologian to share Christ with others. Just tell them that Christmas is all about the birth of Christ who came to be our Savior. Tell them Jesus died on the cross for their sins so they could be forgiven. Tell them Jesus rose from the dead and that He is alive today. Tell them Jesus is coming back to bring peace on earth. That is all very good news and remember, good news is for sharing. If you know Jesus as your Savior, then you know the joy of salvation, and joy leads to proclamation. If you have not experienced the great joy of sharing the gospel then you have missed one of the great experiences of this life.

Finally, joy in Jesus leads to praise. Praise God every day for your salvation. Praise Him for His amazing grace. Praise Him for His great love in sending His Son, Jesus, to be your Savior. Praise God for His goodness and kindness in forgiving your sins. Praise God for the miracle of the incarnation at Christmas, that God the Son took on human flesh and was born into our world as a little baby. Remember what we read in Isaiah  12:3, “[With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.](#)” Let me encourage you this morning, with great joy draw great buckets of praise from the great reservoir of blessings that God has given you in your salvation.

Are you filled with joy this Christmas season? You should be! Because God is good, Christ has come, and salvation is yours for the asking. Christmas is all about joy, because joy comes from Jesus and Christmas is all about Christ. Amen!