

JOY!!!

(Luke 2:10)

We have many emotions as we celebrate Christmas but there is no emotion so characteristic of Christmas than joy. The atmosphere of Christmas is joyful. This has been the case ever since the angels announced, in the first Christmas sermon, the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem.

The angel said that night to them: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great JOY that will be for all..."

This is why we sing about Joy so often in our carols. "Joy to the World the Lord is come..."

THREE OBSERVATIONS OF THE JOY PRODUCED BY THE FIRST CHRISTMAS URGING US TO REJOICE AT THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

I. Joy Is A Difficult Word To Define.

- A. The dictionary states: "Joy is a vivid emotion of pleasure...to be delighted." (Oxford)
But this seems sterile.
- B. The reason the word is so hard to define is that it seems to stand alone. There is nothing quite like it.
 - 1. C.S. Lewis used the word to title his autobiography, Surprised By Joy. Until he met Jesus, he had never known anything like joy.
 - 2. Usually things are define by their opposites, but with joy, there is not one.
 - 3. Joy is unique, because it has its source in our unique God.

II. Joy Is Easily Found Throughout The Christmas Story.

All five of the following exude with JOY at the birth of our Lord.

- A. The Angels themselves experienced it, which is why they were giving praise to God that night.
 - 1. Jesus told that the angels, "Rejoice in heaven over even one sinner who repents."
(Luke 15:7, 10)
 - 2. So how could they not rejoice over the birth of Him who would save far more?
 - 3. This joy was a "heavenly joy." (Boice)
- B. The shepherds rejoiced at the birth of Jesus. (Luke 2:20)
 - 1. They might have missed this joy thinking the good news was not for themselves, but for more important people. Many make this mistake today.
 - 2. Instead of dismissing the message, they ran off to Bethlehem and saw the baby...and returned "Glorifying God for all the things they had heard and seem." (2:12, 20)

3. Perhaps the simple circumstances were a major reason for their joy. Not a palace, nor a castle, nor even the Inn...where they would have been turned away, but a stable. Shows that any person could come to Him. The same is true today. It matters not... Jesus is accessible to all mankind! This is "earthly joy, a very humble joy."
- C. Mary must have had a "profound joy."
 1. John 16:21...tells of the joy a mother has who has just delivered a baby.
 2. How much greater must Mary's have been when she gave birth to the One she knew would be the Savior? (Luke 2:19)... "Mary treasured up all these things in her heart..."
 - D. Joseph must have had "an awesome joy." For the angel had appeared to him months earlier to explain Mary's conception as miraculous. He must have said like Mary, "May it be as you said."
 - E. The Wise Men (Magi) expressed "an extravagant joy." (Matthew 2:1-11, especially vv. 10-11) Here we see the Gospel is for all people, from the smallest(shepherds) to the greatest(Magi).

III. Joy Is The By-Product Of The Gospel. "Joy" and "Rejoicing" are found throughout the NT.

- A. Joy is the distinguishing atmosphere of the Christian life. "Rejoice always..."(Phil 4:4) No matter what befalls us. This is Holy Spirit produced in us. "A joyless life is not a Christian life"
- B. There is great joy in Christian fellowship. We were not made to be isolated. See the Christmas story, for there is no one standing alone. Angels, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and the Magi.
- C. There is joy in the Gospel. With the angels here...with the angel's announcement at the tomb of Jesus..."He is not here...they hurried away, afraid, yet filled with JOY." (Matt 28:5-6)
- D. Christian work and witness produces such joy for us as believers. Why? God works through us.

**So this Christmas, let's rejoice and be filled with joy. All because of these words:
 "Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord."**