

## 12-15-24 Christmas Together

### Week 2

**Text: Luke 2:8–20**

**Topics:** Don't Miss It, Shepherds, Angels, Joy, Peace, Outreach, Evangelism

**Big Idea of the Message:** Christmas brings together the lowly and outcasts of society and invites them to worship the King of Kings.

**Application Point:** No matter what our social status may be, a personal encounter with Jesus compels us to reach out to our community and share the good news of Jesus with all who will listen.

What are some examples of some unexpected news? Good or bad?

How did you receive/respond to the good news? How about the bad?

How can we have great joy, no matter if the news is good or bad?

**Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again, rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Philippians 4:4-5**

The apostle Paul, writing from prison, calls believers to rejoice. This seems unexpected, doesn't it? How can someone in chains call others to be full of joy?

But this is the very nature of the joy we have in Christ—it shouldn't depend on circumstances, and it often comes in the most surprising ways, through the unexpected Jesus.

Not only does Jesus give us joy, but He brings us peace.

There was another group of people in the Christmas story who didn't want to miss out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit the Son of God on the day of his birth. They could not contain their joy for what they had been told and seen with their own eyes.

What can we learn from them.

#### I. Unexpected Joy is found in the Lord, Not in Circumstances

- Paul says, **“Always be full of joy in the Lord.”** This is key, our joy is not based on the things we see or experience, but on the Lord Himself. The Greek word used here for **"joy"** is (chara), meaning a deep, abiding gladness rooted in God's character and His promises.
- Let's be real: We often expect joy to come from good circumstances—when life is easy, when we succeed, when things go our way.
- But Paul, in prison, shows us that joy in Christ isn't dictated by external conditions. It's unexpected because it flourishes even in adversity.
- **Read Luke 2:8-14.**
- The angels, when they announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, didn't just bring any news—they brought **“good news that will bring great joy to all people” (Luke 2:10, NLT).**

- Imagine that: The Messiah was born in a stable, to a poor couple, in an occupied nation. That's not where the world expected joy to come from. Yet, the birth of Jesus was the greatest source of joy ever to come to the world.

This is in direct contrast to the Roman emperors who were celebrated as “Savior” and “Lord” on their birthdays. At this time in the Roman Empire, it was common for “poets and orators to declare peace and prosperity at the birth of one who was to become emperor.” The proclamation of Christ’s birth was first declared “not in palace halls but in the fields, to the poor and lowly” (Fred B. Craddock).

- The King of Kings, Savior of the world, was born to an unwed, teenage girl, to a carpenter and in a cave or shed, with no place to call home. Yet, Joy to the World!
- I don’t want to make light of anyone’s circumstances, but I think most of us have plenty to be joyful about.
- We might not have the newest of things, or be able to buy our kids whatever they want, but most if not all of us are well clothed and well fed. Yet often we take for granted what God has done for us. We are blessed beyond measure!
- Unexpected Jesus often brings joy in the most surprising places. You might be looking at a difficult situation today and wondering, “Where is the joy in this?” But let me encourage you—Jesus can bring joy right into the heart of your struggle, just as He brought joy into a humble manger in Bethlehem.
- If you are a believer, you should be joyful! You are loved and the God of this universe has rescued you from the pits of hell.

**Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith Christ was revealed in a human body and vindicated by the Spirit. He was seen by angels and announced to the nations. He was believed in throughout the world and taken to heaven in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16 NLT**

## **II. Unexpected Joy and Peace in the Face of Trials.**

- In our trials, we don’t expect joy, do we? Yet, the Bible is clear that trials often produce joy because they refine us.

**“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.” James 1:2-3**

- Here, we see another unexpected reality: Trials, challenges, and difficulties can be opportunities for joy.
- The word “**tested**” here comes from the Greek word (dokimazo), meaning to prove or refine, like gold in a fire. When our faith is refined, joy often springs forth because we see God’s faithfulness in the fire.
- Think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. They expected to be thrown into the fire, but they didn’t expect Jesus to join them there! The presence of Jesus in the furnace was the unexpected miracle that protected them and turned a trial into a testimony of God’s glory.

- Likewise, when we go through tough times, the unexpected Jesus shows up in ways we don't anticipate. It could be in the form of comfort from the Holy Spirit, an encouraging word from a friend, or a peace that passes understanding. Joy often arises when we least expect it, and Jesus is right there with us in the fire.
- The angel's proclamation to shepherds is significant. Shepherds were seen as social outcasts because "their work made them ceremonially unclean". Their low status meant shepherds were not allowed in the city and not trusted by the public, for often they were thieves.
- The shepherds were in the trials of life and were the ones that God revealed the greatest joy for all mankind.
- God gave His very best for all mankind. And rather than having His son born in a palace, He choose to send Him in the lowliest ways.
- By doing this, we can connect with Him. He is one of us. He chose to be born into a mess so that He could connect with messiness.
- Not only does Jesus bring JOY but He brings PEACE. The word "**peace**" appears over 400 times in Scripture. In the Old Testament, "**peace**" is the word shalom, and is a state of wholeness, restoration, reconciliation and harmony that is intended to resonate in all relationships.
- When used as a greeting, shalom was a wish for outward freedom from disturbance as well as an inward sense of well-being. To a people constantly harassed by enemies, peace was the premiere blessing.
- The word "**peace**" in the New Testament means to "join together; to set at one again." It has the idea of gluing something back together and is used in at least four ways.
  - Peace with God – that's the vertical dimension
  - Peace of God – this takes place internally
  - Peace with others – that's peace horizontally
  - Peace for others – that's the proclamation of peace in the gospel

In his classic book called, "**Peace with God,**" written over 50 years ago, Billy Graham hits it on the head: "The greatest warfare going on in the world today is between mankind and God. People may not realize that they are at war with God, but if they don't know Jesus Christ as their Savior...God considers them to be at war with Him."

- Because of what Jesus Christ did on the Cross, you and I can now be at peace with God. God the Father poured out His wrath, fury, and indignation on His Son (Jesus), who died in our place, as our sin-substitute. Immanuel is our intermediary.

**Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1ESV**

**For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility Ephesians 2:14 ESV**

**and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. Colossians 1:20 ESV**

### III. An Unexpected Joy and Peace that Cannot Be Taken Away.

- Finally, the joy that Jesus brings is not just unexpected—it's unshakable. It cannot be stolen, removed, or diminished by anything this world throws at us.

**“So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.” John 16:22 NLT**

- Jesus spoke these words to His disciples before He went to the cross. They were about to face the darkest moment of their lives—watching their Savior be crucified. But Jesus promises that after the resurrection, their joy will be restored, and no one would be able to take it away. That's the kind of eternal joy Jesus offers to all of us.
- Propitiation brings peace. Once we are justified by faith, peace is a primary reality for the believer.
- Imagine a tree planted by the rivers of water, deeply rooted. When storms come, the tree may sway, but it doesn't break because its roots are deep. That's the kind of joy Jesus gives us—a joy that is rooted in Him. No storm, no circumstance, no trial can take it away.
- This is the joy of the unexpected Jesus—a joy that comes in places we never thought possible, a joy that endures and grows in trials, and a joy that cannot be taken away.
- Peace comes to those who praise Him, and He gives grace to those who give Him glory.
- Give glory to God – that's the first thing
- Give and receive peace to others.
- We must keep the order straight.
- Hope has a name...it's Jesus!
- Love has a name...it's Jesus!
- Joy has a name...it's Jesus!
- Peace has a name...it's Jesus!

#### **Conclusion:**

Jesus, Our unexpected Joy, our undeserved peace!

What have we talked about today?

First, that Jesus often brings joy into our lives in unexpected ways. Whether it's through surprising moments of grace, comfort in trials, or the unshakable joy of knowing that our salvation is secure, Jesus is the source of a joy that transcends circumstances.

**Philippians 4:4–5 tells us to “rejoice in the Lord always.”** This is not a superficial joy—it's a deep, abiding joy that comes from knowing Jesus. And it's a joy that no circumstance, no trial, and no hardship can take away.

The peace we need to seek comes from God through His Son Jesus.

Call to Action:

So, how do we respond?

We must be intentional and look for God's joy and peace in unexpected places. Don't just wait for everything to be perfect before you experience joy. Instead, ask the Lord to reveal His joy to you, even in the midst of challenges. Pray for the unexpected Jesus to show up in your life in ways you don't expect.

If you've never experienced the joy that comes from knowing Jesus, today is the day to meet Him. True joy begins with a relationship with Him. No matter where you are in life, no matter how difficult your circumstances may be, Jesus offers you an unshakable joy.

Through this proclamation of Jesus's arrival and invitation to seek Jesus, God demonstrates that Christmas, and the gospel, is to reach our community. To realize that we are all outcasts that need Jesus, and though we are a mess, He majors on messes.

God gave His best gift for

- I. The least.**
- II. The last.**
- III. The lost.**

Who is on the outside in your family, friendship group, or community that you could reach out to with the love of Christ this Christmas?

Pray with me:

Lord Jesus, I come to You today seeking the joy and peace that only You can give. I confess that I have sought joy in other places, and it has left me empty. But today, I turn to You, the source of true joy and peace. I believe that You died for my sins, and rose again to give me new life, which gave me peace with God. Fill me with Your joy, a joy that cannot be shaken by life's storms. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.