

Great Joy

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

Special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

Last Sunday, we finished Romans chapter three. And so we're pausing for a number of months in our series in the book of Romans. We've actually been in the season of Advent for the last couple of weeks.

And this Sunday, we are going to honor that by turning to the stories surrounding Christ's birth. The word Advent comes from a Latin word that means to come or to arrive.

[1 : 08] And so during the Advent season, we celebrate Jesus arriving or coming to earth. And so we do that in a couple of ways. We celebrate what has happened in the past.

And we sing songs like, Joy to the World, the Lord has come. But we don't just celebrate what's happened in the past. We also look forward to Jesus' second coming in the future.

And so we sing songs like, O come, O come, Emmanuel. And in fact, when we do that, the Advent season, we're actually doing what is the whole Christian life.

Because the Christian life is this. We look to what God has done in the past. We celebrate that. We look forward to what God will do in the future.

And we long for that. And both of those things allow us to be faithful in the present. We celebrate God's work in the past. We look forward to his work in the future.

[2 : 05] We live faithful lives now. And so we're going to pick up where we left off last year. Last year we were in Luke chapter 1. We looked, I believe, at Mary's song.

And so now we're picking up in Luke chapter 2, starting at verse 8. And as we come to this, I want you to remember there's a lot going on in this passage. We have fear and peace and Mary and angels and shepherds and glory.

And we will, in fact, not be able to look at all of those things this morning. And so this is a rich passage. We're going to have a narrow focus.

We're going to focus on verses 10 and 11, which tell us that there is good news of great joy. And as we go through this, we're going to see two things.

First, the source of joy. And second, the response of joy. We're going to see the source of joy and then the response of joy.

[3 : 05] And so it's with that I invite you to turn with me now to Luke chapter 2. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone.

No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word. And Proverbs 30, verse 5, tells us, Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

And so that's why we read now Luke chapters 2, starting at verse 8. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

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. 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.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

[4 : 17] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

Verse 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.

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all they had heard and seen as it had been told to them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

[5 : 33] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you again that you hold this world together by the word of your power.

That the Son reminds us that you give life to the earth and life to us. That our every breath depends on you. But we confess this morning that we are easily distracted.

That we love many things that won't satisfy. That we trip over the experiences and memories and conditioning of our past.

And that we desperately need you and your spirit to move among us. And so we ask that you would do that this morning. That you would pour out your Holy Spirit in a special way in this room on these people.

That you would be with us as we hear from you in your word. That you challenge us. You'd encourage us. That most of all, that you would show us Jesus. That we would see his beauty and glory and mercy and grace and love.

[6 : 43] And that it would change us. We ask these things in his mighty name. Amen. If you could choose one thing that would give you more joy, what would you choose?

Would you choose a clean house? Maybe you would choose more money. Maybe your hope is to be independently wealthy.

Maybe you think the secret to joy is that your spouse would finally turn towards you. And see you. And listen to you.

For the first time. In a long time. Maybe you would have joy if someone finally recognized your accomplishments.

And saw how important you are. Maybe you have a relationship with a family member that is strained or cut off.

[8 : 02] Maybe there's injustice that's been done in the world. And you think if there could just, that could just be made right. I could feel joy again. Maybe, and you wouldn't admit this one out loud.

Maybe it's revenge. If that person could finally pay for that thing they did, then I could feel whole and complete.

What does it take to get there? What will it take for you to feel and have joy?

What will it take for you to feel and have joy? This passage in Luke chapter 2 raises that question for us. We start at verse 8. But it's important to know what we're picking up from.

Verse 8 starts with what's happening with the angels appearing to the shepherds. But we have just come off verse 7. And verse 7 is actually the birth of Christ.

[9 : 05] It says this. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the end.

So verses 1 through 7 of Luke 2 is the birth story. Now verse 8 through 21, we have the immediate follow-up. That means when you read in verse 8 that it says it's in the same region.

It's in the same region that Jesus has been born. This is the response to Jesus' advent, his coming to the earth.

And so we're off to the races. Things move fast in this passage. Verse 9, an angel appears and the shepherds are terrified. We're told that they are filled with great fear.

Now remember I told you that this is a dense, a rich passage. We're going to have a narrow focus. We could have an entire sermon about the fact that these angels are filled with great fear.

[10:07] Before we know it though, we're right there. We've jumped very quickly to the idea of joy. Look with me at verse 10. The angel says, fear not.

And why is it that they shouldn't be afraid by what is in fact a terrifying sight, this army of angels? They're not supposed to fear.

Again, verse 10. Because I bring you good news of great joy. Now, this had better be a pretty big joy, right?

It has to be a joy big enough to chase away a pretty big fear. What are we told? Verse 9, remember they're filled with great fear.

Not normal fear, big fear. And so what is it that they need to chase that away? They don't need normal joy. They need big joy. It's going to have to be a joy that is bigger than their fear.

[11:15] Thankfully, we don't have to wait long to find out what this big joy is. Verse 11, There you go.

I solved it for you. You're not feeling joy this Christmas season? Just read verse 10. That'll solve it for you.

That's all you need to know. We can close our Bibles. We can go home and pray. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

What is the source of joy? The big joy is that Jesus is born. Now, you might be thinking, that's great. Of course you're going to say that, Matthew.

You're a preacher. And it is your job to come to us and say, guess what? You can have great joy because of Jesus. And you might be thinking, yeah, I've grown up in the church for a long time.

[12:24] I know that. I don't need you to tell me. It's Christmas, of course. But I have great fear, and it hasn't been cast out.

Verse 10 has not magically solved all of my problems. How do I find, how do I get this great joy? What is it about the city of David having a Savior who is Christ the Lord?

What is it about that that is a big joy that can chase away big fears? Samuel Johnson was an English writer in the 18th century, and he said this, people need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed.

People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed. And so this morning, I am here to do one thing. I am here to remind you.

[13:39] I'm here to remind you of what the great joy is that comes from the birth of Jesus the King in the city of David. How does Jesus being born give us great joy?

Well, one of the answers we've already sang. You sang this morning the song, Come, People of the Risen King.

This is on page two of your worship guide. And what have we already sung together but this? For his perfect love will never change, and his mercies never cease.

But follow us through all our days with the certain hope of peace. There are many people in this world who have a hope for peace.

They do not have a certain hope. Christian, you do.

[14:46] You have a certain hope. You actually know the future. Jesus has been born. He's come in his first coming.

What is your certain hope? That you know he's returning in his second coming. Your hope is not that some billionaire or politician will finally fix the world and make things right.

No, they're not powerful enough. Your hope is that the sovereign king of the universe has promised that as the most powerful power in the whole world, the power against which nothing can stand, will come and make all things right.

You, Christian, don't have a hope. You have a certain hope. You do know what will come to pass, and it will come to pass because unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

We sang this on page six with O come, O come, O come Emmanuel. Did envy, strife, and quarrels cease?

[16:12] Fill the whole world with heaven's peace. That was not a pie-in-the-sky hope that we sang. No, we were reminding God of his promise that he's made to his people and saying, yes, keep it.

As we look around the world and see the turmoil that it's in, make it true what you've said that you will bring peace to the people. And how do we know that we can say this with a certain hope?

We know because Jesus, God, has already made the down payment. Right? Remember I told you Advent is about looking to what God has done in the past and looking forward to what he will do in the future.

How do we know that God will do this in the future? We know this because the resurrection of the Son of God. Ephesians chapter one, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you.

Jesus' resurrection tells us that there is a supernatural, evil-killing, life-restoring power at work in this world. And so we know that Jesus is coming back.

[17 : 32] Let me put it this way. Christian, you have a better hope and a better future than Elon Musk, who is the richest man in the world.

You have a better hope and you have a better future than him. You know more about the future than Elon Musk does.

If you're in Christ, you have more security than Elon Musk does. What is it that people with that kind of wealth do if not measure and manage risk?

Christian, you have less risk to manage than Bill Gates because you know that Jesus is coming back.

Why? For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Wow.

[18 : 43] Wow. Do you believe that? Do you believe it?

I've told you about the future of this world. We've sung about it. But this is not just about the future of the world. This passage also talks about your future.

Verse 11 doesn't just tell us it is Christ the Lord. It tells us that we have a Savior. And it goes on to tell us in verse 14 that there will be on earth peace.

And this peace is going to be for a specific group of people. Among those with whom he is pleased. It is not merely or simply that we know that God is coming back to restore all things and that the promise that was made in Jesus' first coming and in his death and his resurrection will be completed.

It is also that if you follow after Jesus Christ, he is at work by his Holy Spirit in a powerful way to restore your relationship with God, your relationship with others, your relationship with this world, and your relationship with yourself.

[20 : 07] That, brothers and sisters, is peace on earth. Remember, I've told you all before, there are many people who want to, who are looking forward to saying to God, God, what have you done?

Why did you let the world get broken as it is? And remember, I've told you, God's going to turn around and say, no, what have you done? Which is a way of saying that we are the problem with this world.

It is our sin that has caused it to be broken and falling apart. There is good news of great joy because if you are in Christ, God is in the process of knitting you and your life back together. And that is more than we can say for many of the billionaires or politicians of this world. You have a greater hope than them.

I'll even suggest you're more powerful than them. Because when God sent Jesus to die on your behalf, he did not just pardon your sins, but he said, you are one of Jesus' brothers or sisters.

[21 : 28] I have adopted you. You have access to me. Elon Musk does not come before the throne room of God as one of his children as far as I know.

You do. Wow. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

And so I bring us back to our first question. If you could choose one thing that would give you more joy, what would you choose? What this passage teaches us among many things is that our joy is not in our circumstances.

Our joy comes from our hope. Our joy is not in our circumstances. Our joy is in our hope. John Calvin in his sermon on this passage points out that these shepherds' circumstances have changed in no way.

They are still shepherds. They are still the lowest class of society. In fact, it was so bad, commentators remind us that shepherds were not allowed to testify as witnesses in court.

[22 : 56] That's how bad off they were. And what is it that they do? Verse 17. Verse 17. Verse 17.

And they saw it. They made known the saying and told them concerning this child. Verse 20. The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told

them.

Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God because they had picked the right lottery ticket. It doesn't tell you that the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God because all the problems in their lives had been ironed out. No, they were filled with glory and praise to God because unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

Christian, that is your joy. Your joy is that Jesus is your hope.

[24 : 09] Your joy is not in your circumstances. What is it that Psalm 46 reminds us of?

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.

What is it saying? Imagine the worst circumstances you can imagine, right? The mountains are falling into the sea. God is your refuge and strength.

God is your refuge and strength. God is your refuge and strength. Proverbs tells us this as well. Proverbs 1 chapter 15. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.

God is better than anything else. The next verse tells us the same thing.

[25 : 16] Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it. This is a whole other sermon, but I'll tell you what many of you already know.

There are many tables with fattened oxes that have a side of hatred. Our hope is not in circumstances.

Our hope is in Jesus the King. Now, you'll remember I told you that I have two points.

The source of joy, also the response of joy. The source of joy, we've seen a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

The passage tells us something else, though. It also tells us the response of joy. Notice that the angels and the shepherds do the very same thing.

[26 : 22] Angels, verses 13 and 14, praise God. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

So the angels see this. They're filled with praise. What do the shepherds do? They see this. They are filled with praise. Verse 20, And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them.

You'll see this on page two of your worship guide, again from John Calvin. When God makes us glad and shows us his favor, we cannot remain passive.

Joy should move and provoke us to give him glory, for he has drawn us out of the pit of death and has brought us to the kingdom of life.

Do you know that God's brought you from the pit of death? And you're in the kingdom of life? In order that we should praise him forever.

[27 : 34] That's the response of joy. That's where we know where our hearts are at. True joy overflows in praise to God. True joy overflows in praise to God.

What was it we talked about last week? Romans chapter 3, verse 27. What becomes of our boasting? Not allowed. Our praise and all of our praise is to God alone.

Where's your praise at? Who are you praising? What are you praising? It's often said that money is both the thermometer and the thermostat of our life, of our hearts.

We could say the same thing about praise. Praise is both the thermometer and the thermostat. Do you want to know where your joy is at?

Look at your praise. What you're praising and who you're praising. That's the thermometer. It measures. It shows us where we're at.

[28 : 50] It doesn't change anything. It just reveals. That's the thermometer. The thermostat, though, changes the temperature. Do you want to have more joy?

Then praise God. It is not an accident that we started our service by saying this.

Rejoice, the Lord is king. Your Lord and king adore. What are we doing together here on Sunday morning if not turning up the temperature on our joy?

In our praise to God. Because what are we doing? We're recognizing that he is our ultimate hope. It's our praise that shows us where our heart is at.

Our praise is the thermometer. It's our praise that reorients us to what is true and real. It's our praise that is the thermostat.

[29 : 58] Where is your praise? I tell people sometimes that in my seven and a half years at this church, I have pastored two or three churches.

Because this is a highly mobile congregation, right? Most folks only stay two to four years. And so if you make it past the four-year mark here, congratulations, you are what I call an old-timer.

Not an insult. It doesn't mean you're old. It means you're an old-timer. Okay? So I'm an old-timer.

Some of you are old-timers. If you are old-timers, you will remember Liz Bergsten.

Liz Bergsten was a member of our congregation faithfully for many years. By the way, if you know Bill Bergsten, one of our deacons, Liz was Bill's mom.

Liz died in October of 2020. She served faithfully here at Cheyenne Mountain as a Sunday school teacher. Liz had many setbacks and disappointments in life.

[31 : 09] She had a divorce. She had failing health, especially at the end of her life. And when you've been a pastor somewhere for seven and a half years, there are images that haunt you and you will never forget.

And one of the ones that haunts me and I will never forget is of Liz Bergsten near the end of her life. Liz would sit over there right about where Scott Sage and Min Garcia are.

She would come in with her walker. And during the singing time, she would be gripping her walker, shouting out to God as loud as she could.

Right? She was not in the best of health. She was not in the best of circumstances. She was filled with praise to God. And I remember looking out one Sunday and seeing her sitting over there, and you could see her hands were gripping the sides of her walker with all the strength she had.

And the strength she had left over was going to sing to God as loud as she could. Liz's body was failing.

[32 : 21] She was filled with joy. Filled with praise to God. A joy not from circumstances.

A joy because Liz knew, unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you that you have given us great joy. Greater joy than the most powerful people in the history of this world.

That you have shamed the strong, and you've honored the weak. We ask that you would remind us of that this morning, that it would give us true and real and full joy, not in wealth or circumstances or health, but in you.

And we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.