

**“JOY”**

**Pastor Mike Corwin**

**3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**TEXT: LUKE 2:8-12**

**GOD’S WORD: LUKE 1:42-56**

**I – THE MAGNIFICANT:**

An early part of the Christmas story is of the angel Gabriel visiting Mary and announcing that she has been chosen by God to bear his one and only Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. To bring into the world Emmanuel, the one who has been prophesized about by her people’s prophets. The one who will come to be the Savior of mankind. I imagine that the appearance of the angel brought a little fright. I’m sure the news he gave her was almost unimaginable. And when she said yes to God I’m guessing she did not know the full ramifications of what she was agreeing to in that moment.

But then I continue reading that story and get to the part you heard read this morning. The scripture first points out that the presence of Jesus, even unborn and in the womb, brought joy to all those who he came into contact with. As Mary entered the home of her cousin Elizabeth, where I’m guessing she went to seek solace and advice for all that had transpired, that Elizabeth was overcome with joy as she gave a “glad cry” and told Mary how blessed she was to be carrying such a special baby. The power of Jesus’ presence, even unborn, caused her baby – John the Baptist – to “jump with joy.”

It’s at this moment I can see the whole of the situation finally came to Mary. That she finally wrapped her head around the whole thing. It’s here that she herself is overcome with Joy and breaks into a song that we have come to know as The Magnificent. The song starts out proclaiming how her very soul praises God and how

her spirit rejoices for having God use her to put his plans on earth into action. For using her to bless all of humankind.

## **II – TEXT:**

Then we get to the shepherds in the Christmas story...

### **Luke 2:9-12 (NLT)**

<sup>8</sup>That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, <sup>10</sup>but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. <sup>11</sup>The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! <sup>12</sup>And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

This is before God’s heavenly army broke into song over the plains outside Bethlehem and sang as we talked about last week. In this preceding narrative we see just one angel appear and make the Holy birth announcement to the shepherds. And as we spoke about last week they were obviously afraid and the angel told them they didn’t need to be. He told them that he was bringing them “good news that would bring great joy to all people.” And then tells them about the baby that was the Messiah they had been waiting for and how had been born and was now resting in the manger in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

I don’t know how they could not be filled with JOY that night!! If you were there how could you stay afraid, how could you not be overcome with JOY.

As shepherds you are considered to be some of the lowest people on earth. You are outcasts given a meager job and left to fend for yourselves in that field. Nobody really cared whether you lived or died. Even the sheep only cared about you based on the fact you led them to grass and to water. That you kept them from being eaten

by wolves and bears, sometimes sacrificing yourself to the wild animals to protect them.

But tonight it all changes. Tonight you are the stand ins for all the sad, demoralized, marginalized, and depressed people of the world. Tonight the God of Creation has stepped into the life of all humanity and you are the first to get the Good News. You are the first of all humanity to be filled with joy over the news that God loves everyone...even you! The angel said that this JOY was for “all people.” That you represented the fact that no one is outside the loving arms of God’s grace and Salvation.

### **III – O HOLY NIGHT:**

My favorite Christmas Carole is one I can’t sing, so I’ll just enjoy listening to Celine Dion sing it, because her voice brings me Christmas joy. I love the song because it tells me of why I and everyone should be filled with joy over the birth of this baby...

O holy night the stars are brightly shining  
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining  
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices  
For yonder breaks a new glorious morn  
Fall on your knees

The words of this song remind me that the world is in dire straits, always has been. That no matter what we are surrounded by trouble and turmoil...sin and error... but these things don’t have the last word. They lose when they come up against the baby born in a stable, the Savior’s entrance into the world. When I realize that no matter what I go through I can have the joy of knowing God, through his Son Jesus the Christ. That because of my relationship to him I have a future where the stars are always brightly shining.

It makes me want to fall to my knees and sing my own magnificent like Mary did.

#### **IV – ALL CAN HAVE JOY:**

People who hear the story today should have the same reaction. Hearing the Good News can bring you JOY.

You don't have to walk in the darkness because the light has come. You don't have to feel insignificant because Jesus came for all. Jesus came for the depressed, the poor, the mentally ill, the blind, the lame, the divorced, the abused, the addicted, the felon, the illiterate, and all those who have been oppressed or marginalized in our world.

And sometimes I forget to say that he came for those who aren't either. I'd say that he also came for the normal. But there really aren't any normal people. We all have problems and issues. But Jesus came for all people! He came for everyone no matter where you fit in.

Jesus wants everyone to come to him and find not only rest and forgiveness...not only hope and peace...but he wants them to find joy in that relationship with him too. May you all find the JOY of Christmas and have your soul and spirit rejoice and sing praises to our Lord & Savior!

AMEN

#### **V – TAKING JOY TO THE WORLD:**

Pastor Becky will tell the congregation how they can spread the gift of joy to others.