

The Gift of Joy

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[0 : 00] Welcome to this week's message from Faith Bible Church of Lake Charles. We're excited to share a practical Bible-based teaching that we hope will encourage you and strengthen your faith.

Thanks for listening. Now, here's today's message. Well, good morning again. I'm so glad to see all of you here today as we gather to celebrate this wonderful season.

This week, we celebrate the birth of our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ. You know, this is often referred to as the season of joy.

And that's one of the things so many people around us as we go through our day, it's one of the things that they lack. They lack deep-seated joy.

You know, sometimes in the hustle and the bustle of this time of year, with all the planning, with all the preparing, we can lose sight of what true joy really is.

[1 : 04] Have you ever had one of those days? You know, the kind, spill coffee, unexpected bills in the mail, and that to-do list that just won't quit. Then out of the blue, you get a phone call from a friend.

And you haven't talked to them a while. And you get to talking to them, and you reminisce. And then all of a sudden, you just feel that your heart's filled with joy.

And you are glad that they called. Your worries fade away. And that unexpected call filled you with joy. And you realize the incredible impact that it had on your life.

This morning, we're going to spend some time talking about the joy that doesn't depend on circumstances, but the joy that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and our Savior.

First, we're going to look at the shepherds over 2,000 years ago that had a tremendous experience there as they were tending their sheep.

[2 : 12] We're going to look into the joy that comes from knowing Jesus Christ, and also how we can spread that joy to others around us, not only during this holiday season, but all throughout the rest of the year as well.

So let's get started and see how we can embrace the true joy of the season. You know, I think back to those shepherds out in the field on that night.

You know, they're swapping stories. Maybe they're complaining about how boring their day was, about how some of the sheep maybe got loose and got lost.

They had to go and find them. Then, all of a sudden, something awesome happens. Let's take a look at the joy of the shepherds at Jesus' birth.

Let's take our Bibles and turn to Luke 2, verses 8 through 14. Luke 2, verses 8 through 14.

[3 : 19] Now, there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be the sign to you. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

Now, it's a quiet night. These shepherds are out in the field doing their job, watching over their sheep. And it's dark.

They're maybe feeling a little bit drowsy as they're swapping stories. Maybe they're getting ready to turn in for the night. And suddenly everything changes.

[4 : 44] An angel appears out of nowhere, and they're blinded by this bright light. Startled much? I think so. And now imagine, excuse me, one of those shepherds in the moment, in the dark, and next you're surrounded by the bright light of the glory of the Lord.

You know, it's no wonder they were terrified at first. And the angel says to them, Don't be afraid. Don't be scared. But his message was clear. As we read just a moment ago in Luke's account, he says, I'm bringing you good news that will bring great joy. It will bring great joy to the world. You know, this wasn't just any news. It was the best news ever. The Savior of the world is born.

For thousands of years, they were waiting for a Messiah. They were waiting for someone who would come from God. And this night, the angel says, for this night, who's born in the city of David, a Savior.

And it would bring good tidings of great joy to the entire world. The Savior, the long-awaited Messiah, was born.

[6 : 09] Now, I don't think the joy that the shepherds felt was just a fleeting emotion. Because I believe the shepherds had heard about the coming Messiah. They had heard about what people were waiting for.

I believe it was a deep-seated joy that came from the news that they heard. It was life-changing. And imagine how they felt.

Dirty, smelly shepherds who had a job that caused them to be unclean. And it was to them that the angel appears and says, here's what I'm going to show you.

The Savior's here. And they told the shepherds where they were. So what did they do? They hurry on to Bethlehem to see the incredible thing that had happened.

Their lives were transformed by the joy of knowing that the Savior had come to the world. Now, this reminds me that the joy that we have today isn't found in gifts.

[7 : 16] It isn't found in the colored lights. Some of you may have already gone around to see the Christmas lights that have been put up and the homes around the area. That's not the true joy that comes from this season because Jesus is the reason for the season that we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Just like the shepherds, we are invited to experience this joy that the shepherds experienced on that dark night. Let it fill our hearts. Let it change our lives.

So as we remember these shepherds' experience, let's open our hearts to the joy that comes from hearing about the Savior.

Now, if this doesn't excite you, then maybe we should come back to realize what we are without Jesus Christ. The Bible says, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The Bible says that the wages of sin is death, eternal separation from God. And because God knew that without the answer that we would die and be separated from Him for eternity.

[8 : 29] So what does He do? He sends His only begotten Son, His unique Son, to be born as a human being, to walk this earth and one day walk to a wooden cross and be crucified and die in our place and on the third day would be raised again to show that God was satisfied with that payment of our penalty on the cross.

So what does this mean for us? We've seen how the shepherds' lives were transformed by the joy of the announcement of the birth of Jesus. So now let's head over to the New Testament and see how we can find that deep everlasting joy in our own lives.

Now let's take a look at finding joy in our relationship with Jesus Christ. We turn now to Philippians chapter 4 and verse number 4. Philippians chapter 4 and verse number 4 where the Bible says rejoice in the Lord when?

Always. Always. When things are great? Yes. When things are bad? Yes. When things are kind of upside down?

Yes. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, rejoice. So we are to rejoice in the Lord. Now that means not just be happy because happy is a what?

[9 : 59] It's an emotion. Happy is an emotion when things are going well. When things are going bad we have the emotion of sadness. But deep-seated joy comes from an experience and the knowledge that Jesus Christ is in our life.

He's in control. He is all-powerful. He is everywhere. And He will work everything in our lives to those who know Jesus Christ. He will work everything out for our good.

I like this verse because it reminds us that real joy is not based on what's happening around us. It's not about having a perfect day.

It's not about everything going our way. Instead, it's about having that deep everlasting joy that comes from knowing Jesus as our Savior.

Now, think about joy like a balloon. You know, when a balloon is deflated, you know, it's empty.

[11 : 04] It doesn't float, does it? You know, there are many people around us who are like this balloon. They're empty. They're going around feeling empty.

And they don't feel like they're lifted up. But what happens when we fill it with air and all we've done is we've filled this balloon.

and instead of being empty and instead of not floating, it becomes almost as light as air.

Think about your own life. Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with the knowledge of knowing Jesus Christ as your Savior? When Jesus Christ comes into our life, when you trust Jesus as your Savior and allow Him to be the Lord of your life and the Holy Spirit comes into your life and the Holy Spirit fills you, He fills you with joy and you're able to rise above the cares of this world and be able to know that you belong to Him.

It's the constant presence that stays with us. Hopefully the balloon will stay here. It might go out there. But it's that joy that comes from knowing Him as our Savior, knowing that we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

[12 : 38] So it isn't just a, it doesn't have to be a temporary feeling because the Holy Spirit resides within us when we know Christ as our Savior and He's always there with us.

See, Paul, when he wrote these words, rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice, he was writing to the Philippian believers. And at this particular time we know that Paul knew a lot about tough circumstances.

As a matter of fact, he wrote this letter while he was in prison because of what he had been saying about Jesus Christ. Because he had been proclaiming the good news of Jesus.

And even still, Paul could go about rejoicing. Paul and Silas were able to sing and pray in the midst of a prison cell as well.

And in other occasions when the Apostle Paul had been beaten, when he had been thrown out of town, he was still able to rejoice. How could he do that? Because his joy wasn't tied to his circumstances.

[13 : 44] His joy wasn't tied to how he was feeling. His joy was deeply rooted in his relationship with Jesus Christ. He knew that Jesus was with him in control and filling him with strength and filling him with hope.

For us, this means that no matter what we're going through, no matter what you and I are going through, whether it's stress at school, whether it's problems at home, whether it's worries about the future, we can find joy in knowing him.

His promise to be with us, he promises to guide us, he promises to fill us with his peace. So, let's focus on building that relationship.

Spend time with him in prayer. Spend time in the word of God. Reading. It's God's love letter to us, is it not? He wanted us to know him. He wanted us to know about him.

And isn't that the point of writing a letter to someone? Especially when you love them, you want them to know as much about you as you can. God already knows everything about us because he created us.

[15 : 02] So, let his love fill your heart. Let his joy fill you as well. Because it's a joy that's unshakable and it's a joy that can carry us through every season of our life.

You realize that our life, we go through seasons, do you not? We're young, we think we can conquer the world, we think we're invincible, things may be going well. As we begin to age, things begin to happen and we are not as energetic as we used to.

We find that our minds think we can, but then our bodies begin to rebel the older we get. And isn't it weird that the older we get, the more we tend to complain?

I mean, just find somebody else who has existed for a number of decades and it seems like we talk about our aches, we talk about our pains, we talk about our surgeries, we talk about why is that? Because our circumstances very often, if we're not careful, tend to dictate how we feel, how we face life, but if we know that this is only temporary, whether you live 60, 80, or 100 years, this life is temporary here on earth because one day we'll breathe our final breath and we will step out into

eternity.

[16 : 40] And it depends on whether you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior or not that will determine where you spend eternity.

And so the joy that comes from knowing Jesus Christ is a pervasive joy, it's a joy that we can experience every single day of our life if we will allow it to.

So, we've looked at the joy of those shepherds over 2,000 years ago, we looked at how we can have joy in our own lives, rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in our circumstances, rejoice in our bank account, no, rejoice in our health, not necessarily, rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in the Lord, always, and he says again, I say rejoice.

Now, let's turn our attention to how we can spread this joy, not only this Christmas season, but every day of the rest of our life here on earth. So spreading joy to those around us.

Let's take a look at the book of Matthew. Matthew chapter 5. Matthew chapter 5 verses 14 through 16 and we gain a little bit of insight as to what we are on this earth.

[17 : 58] If the Holy Spirit resides within us, if we know Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are ambassadors to the world around us. He said, verse 14, in Matthew chapter 5, you are the light of the world.

A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

So what are we to do? He says, so let your light shine, so shine before men that they may see your good works, and in turn glorify you.

No, that they may glorify your Father in heaven. Light is able to penetrate the darkness, and when you're trying to find your way, and it's totally dark, and you're groping your way through the house, through the woods, wherever it is, is it necessarily a pleasant experience?

No, of course not, because you're wondering, am I going to bump into something? Am I going to see something that could hurt me? But when we have light, it provides that sense of maybe safety, or allows us to see around us.

[19 : 23] We can have the same impact on the world around us when we shine the light of Jesus Christ, and we can show people the way, how they can have peace in their life, how they can be filled, how they can fill the emptiness of their life with the knowledge that they belong to God, their sins are forgiven, and that they know that God is in control of their life.

Now, this is a powerful call for us to share the joy of Jesus Christ with every one we meet. Now, think about a single candle that can light up the room. We've done this before.

We've done this before on New Year's Eve, turned out all the lights, total darkness, we light a candle, and even just that single candle can light the room around us enough for us to see people's faces.

But then as we pass that light around and light more candles, and we see more light shining around the room, before you know it, we have almost every corner of that room lit up by the candles.

So, in the same way, our light can brighten the lives of others. When we share the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shine that joy, and it can have a ripple effect on the lives of others.

[20 : 45] Many who may be going through a difficult time, maybe some others who have had tragedy in their life, and we are able to share the hope that comes from Jesus Christ.

we are able to share and show the light of the world, and especially important during this Christmas season. Because during this Christmas season, we know there are people around us who are sad, there are people around us who have lost loved ones, and you know the holidays are different when we don't have loved ones with us, when we're missing those who used to be here.

We know that there are many people who are severely depressed during this time of the year.

So maybe just a little act of kindness, just sharing the love of Jesus Christ to someone else around us could make a huge, huge difference. And this is especially true during this Christmas season.

It's a time when people are searching for meaning in life, searching for hope as well. So consider the impact of a simple act of kindness, a kind word, a note, a phone call to someone, and just sharing the love of Jesus with them.

[22 : 04] These small gestures can make a big difference in someone's life. Maybe you know someone who's going through a tough time. Share the hope of Jesus with them, and that He can make all the difference in their life.

Maybe by reaching out and sharing the joy that you found in Jesus Christ, you can offer them hope, you can offer them comfort. So let's be intentional about spreading joy.

You know, just last week we went around and sharing a Christmas meal. You know, it wasn't much, but it was something.

Just that little thing that you can do in your neighborhood, at work, something that shares the hope and the love and the joy of Jesus Christ. It could be as simple as volunteering at a charity, a local charity, writing a heartfelt note to a friend, or even just being present listening to someone.

Maybe they're going through a tough time. Maybe they're reminiscing about a loved one. We never know the impact that we can have on somebody else's life. But as we're also pointing others to the true source of joy, to Jesus Christ.

[23 : 18] So as we go about our daily lives, let's remember that we have the incredible opportunity to be lights in the world around us. So let's shine brightly, sharing the joy of Christ everywhere and with those that we encounter.

And watch how God can use us, maybe to transform the lives of others through the joy that we share in Jesus Christ. Now think about back to the shepherds, who went from ordinary fields to extraordinary joy, just because of the message that they heard from the angel.

Remember how Paul found joy even in a prison cell, not dependent on his circumstances, but dependent upon the joy and his relationship with Jesus Christ. And consider how your own life can be a beacon of hope to those around us.

Consider it all joy. He says, James says, when we encounter various trials. Because it's the joy that we can have in our life when we know that God is in control.

This is the kind of joy that changes everything. So as you go about your week, I encourage you to allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with joy.

[24 : 30] Just as we filled this balloon with breath. And by the way, that's the Greek word, *panelma*, for spirit.

spirit, the breath of God, can fill our life with joy. So spend some time with Jesus. Let his love fill your heart.

And then let that love overflow to others. Be intentional about spreading that joy in our lives this week, whether it's through a kind word, whether it's through a helping hand, or simply being present for someone who needs it.

God, imagine what our world would look like if each of us committed to being carriers of joy. Not carriers of doom, or gloom, or complaining.

We have enough of that in the world around us. But if we be carriers of joy, imagine the impact we could have in our schools. Imagine the impact we could have in our homes.

[25 : 35] Imagine the impact we could have in our communities around us where many communities are filled with hate, filled with people hurting others.

What if we are able to share the joy of Jesus Christ with those around us? I think this kind of joy can change the world one life at a time. Let's pray. Father, this morning we thank you for your goodness.

We thank you for your love, and we thank you for the joy that we can have. True joy that comes from knowing Jesus. True joy that comes from knowing that we belong to you, that our life is in your hands.

And Father, that we may be able to share that love of Jesus with those around us, where others may be able to see the joy that just shines and fills our lives.

We pray, Father, this morning that you would inhabit our praise. you would send us away this morning that we may be your ambassadors to a hopeless and a dying world, that we may bring hope and joy to others around us.

[26 : 44] We thank you for each one here today. We pray that you would bless each one above and beyond measure. We thank you as well, Father, for the offering that we're about to receive. May you use it to accomplish your purpose in the world around us.

Father, for this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for joining us today. We hope this message encouraged you and gave you something to apply to your life this week.

If you'd like to learn more about Faith Bible Church or connect with us, visit our website at meetfaith.org. We'd love to hear from you. Have a great week, and we'll see you next time. hope this week.