

**Text:** Luke 2:1-14

**Title:** God With Us in our Joys

**Shaft:** The great joy of the gospel is that we get God.

**Main Point:** God is the source and companion of all our joys.

How? 3 things we need in order to live in this joy.

- 1) Know our reality (2:4, 8-9)
- 2) Experience God presence (2:10-12)
- 3) Sing praise to God (2:13-14)

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Sermon Series recap

This advent season we have been focusing on “God with us.” We have focused on God with us in our Hopes and Fears, the Mundane, our sorrows, and now our joys. Out of all the sermons this one is probably the most taken for granted truth. There is a large amount of Christian literature and sermons constantly aimed at encouraging us to hope in God in the midst of our fears. And we need to be shaken up periodically to realize that God is with us in the hum-drum moments of life. Furthermore, most believers powerfully see God support them in the darkest times of their life. But I would venture to say that when things are good, it is hard for us to trust God, let alone experience his presence on a daily basis.

### B. Missing joy with much

**EXAMPLE**- David & Nebedchadnezzar

Two examples, a believer and unbeliever, come to mind to illustrate this point.

**David**- In 2nd Samuel 11 we read that David finally made it in life. He is finally King, the land is all but conquered, and he starts enjoying the fruits of his labor. But he doesn't enjoy it with God. He commits adultery with Bathsheba and has her husband murdered to cover it up.

**Nebedchadnezzar**- Furthermore, at the height of his power Nebedchadnezzar looks around all that he possesses from his roof top and says, “**Is this not Babylon the Great that I have built to be a royal residence by my vast power and for my majestic glory?**” (Daniel 4:30).

What these men have in common is that they missed God's goodness in the joyous times of life. As Agur the son of Jakeh said,

**Proverbs 30:7-9**

**7** Two things I ask of you;

don't deny them to me before I die:

**8** Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me.

Give me neither poverty nor wealth;

feed me with the food I need.

9 Otherwise, I might have too much  
and deny you, saying, "Who is the Lord?"  
or I might have nothing and steal,  
profaning the name of my God.

Now I don't think that Agur is saying we shouldn't enjoy God's good gifts. James tells us that every good and perfect gift is from the Father of lights (James 1:17) Rather, he is recognizing that having too much puts his heart in a place where he simply could not enjoy it with God because he became prideful. He even goes so far as to say he profanes God's name.

### C. Missing joy with little

But maybe this morning you hear me say all that and think, "That's not my problem, I don't have enough to be joyful about!" But this is just as profane as the first sinful way of missing joy. While the first attitude says, "I have enough- therefore I don't need God." This one says, "I don't have enough- therefore I will use God to give me what I want." At this time of year of giving presents I think all of us know how this feels. Have you ever given someone a gift, but they didn't thank you and threw it away?" Or have you ever had someone intimate that you didn't love them unless you gave them a gift, only to have them forget you as soon as they got it? How did it feel?

These are just two ways of failing to experience joy in and with the giver. And we treat God this way. I say this because today's passage is all about joy. In Luke 2 we see the greatest gift that God has given to us, Jesus. And as he is born into the world, angels visit shepherds with a proclamation of joy.

**Main Point:** God is the source and companion of all our joys.

There are three things Luke tells us to do to experience this joy.

## 1) Know our reality

**Main Point:** God is the source and companion of all our joys.

### Luke 2

4 In those days....

4 Joseph...he was of the house and family line of David....

8 In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

### A. Broken and sinful

Luke tells us as he recounts the gospel of Jesus Christ that we all live in a certain reality. And what reality do we live in? We live in a broken and sinful world. First, he begins this section saying, "In those days." Caesar Augustus, is emperor and Rome is ruling. Luke provides historical data, but he is also pointing out that God's people are in the bondage of slavery under Rome. This is not the way it was supposed to be for God's people. God rescued them from slavery in Egypt, but here they are again- oppressed. Second, Luke mentions that Joseph is of the line of David. Doing this sets up Jesus as the inheritor of all King David's promises. The entire reason for God making covenant promises to David was because he planned to send the rescuer, the Messiah, to pay for our sin.

Our reality is that we live in a broken and sinful world. And it's not just "out there." It is also, "in here." We are broken and sin against God and other people.

If Luke's allusions to what's wrong with the world don't strike you he also tells us plainly about our reality by the way he talks about the shepherds.

### B. Our perilous position

As the shepherds watched their flock at night an angel appeared to them. If this doesn't terrify you, it's because you have never seen an angel. In every biblical example I am aware of, angels always have to say, "Do not fear" because they are so terrifying. It's not because they are grotesque. It's because they are majestic. Creatures that worship God in his presence reflect his majesty. There seems to be different classes of angels mentioned in the Scriptures with even the lowest class, angels, causing people to be frozen with fear.

Are people terrified by angels because of their size, weapons, aura? Perhaps, but I think it is more related to them reflecting God's holiness. The shepherds were terrified by the angel and ... the glory of the Lord. This is undoubtedly a real life reference to what the Rabbi's called the shekinah glory of God. I'll talk about this more in a minute, but for now just know when people experience it they believe it's judgement day.

Now, what does all this mean for us? It means that anytime in the Bible when we see broken and sinful people start to experience the light of God's presence, they naturally assume they are about to die. God is so glorious that we darkened creatures perish in his presence. And that is our reality, unless God intervenes, which is what we see next.

**Do you accept the brokenness of the world? Do you accept your own brokenness? Do you believe God is holy? To live contrary to this reality ultimately means we are living in fantasy. And fantasy won't be of any help when reality comes crashing in.**

## 2) Experience God's presence

**Main Point: God is the source and companion of all our joys.**

### **Luke 2:10-12**

**10** But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: **11** Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

Second, we must experience God’s presence.

#### **A. Divine presence**

These shepherds are quaking in their sandals; they feel like their death sentence has been passed. But then the angel tells them to not be afraid because of incredibly good news, joyous news. The word for gospel in Greek is actually the verbal form of good news. I take that to mean that this is joyous news that does something. It is active! This is joyous news that melts the fear off of them. How could this be? God’s presence has returned. Words fail to describe the magnitude of this moment, but I’ll try.

God’s presence and glory are inseparable in the Scriptures. When you see one you see the other. God is also not corporal. He doesn’t have a body. His glory is a way to talk about his manifested presence. When Adam and Eve were in God’s presence in the Garden of Eden they experienced his glory. When they sinned and were expelled from the Garden, God’s presence became dangerous to them for the first time.

Moses experienced God’s glory and presence at the burning bush ([Ex. 3:2](#)) and then led Israel out of Egypt to the same mountain where God’s glory fell on the mountain.

### **Exodus 24:17**

<sup>17</sup> Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

On the way, God led them by a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day ([Ex. 13:21](#)) Moses was in God’s presence for 40 days on the mountain without food or drink sustained by God’s presence ([Ex. 34:28](#)). Moses pleaded for God to let him see His glory, God covered Moses in a crack of the mountain and just gave him the afterglow lest he die.

### **Exodus 33:12-18**

**12** Moses said to the Lord, “Look, you have told me, ‘Lead this people up,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor with me.’ **13** Now if I have indeed found favor with you, please teach me your ways, and I will know you, so that I may find favor with you. Now consider that this nation is your people.”

**14** And he replied, “**My presence** will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

**15** “If **your presence** does not go,” Moses responded to him, “don’t make us go up from here. **16** How will it be known that I and your people have found favor with you unless you go with us? I and your people will be distinguished by this from all the other people on the face of the earth.”

17 The Lord answered Moses, "I will do this very thing you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and I know you by name."

18 Then Moses said, "Please, let me see your glory."

After Israel finished building the Tabernacle of God's dwelling His presence rested with them.

### Exodus 40:34-35

34 The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Later on David's heart's desire was to build a temple for the Lord to dwell in so that all people might worship him, but his son Solomon was the one to build it. And after it was finished, again, God's glory filled it such that the priests were not able to continue ministering (2 Chron. 5:13-14).

But God's people turned away from Him and worshiped other gods. In response, God's presence left. The prophet Ezekiel tells us in his tenth chapter that he saw the glory of the LORD move away from the Temple (Ezek. 10:18-19). This led to the beginning of the 400 silent years of no revelation from God.

### B. Divine presence in Jesus

But then, unexpectedly, on this night, God's presence returned. But God's glory did not return to a tabernacle or temple. God's presence returned in a baby. The angel verifies this to us with Jesus' three titles:

- 1) Savior- only Caesar Augustus was called Savior
- 2) Messiah (Christ)- the OT term of God's anointed one
- 3) Lord- as in *the* Lord God.

The Good news of great joy for everyone is that God's presence is available. As thousands of angels are about to say, "The war is over for those that experience God's good will!"

If we are to live with joy then we must experience God's presence. Now you and I won't experience what these shepherds did, but that's actually good news. Why? Paul, someone who experienced the risen Christ says that the glory of the risen Christ is even better than what men experienced before. The way that we experience God's presence in the clearest sense is in believing the gospel. This is good news for us because through Christ God has given us his Spirit, His own presence, to dwell in us. And the work of the Spirit enables us to see Christ through faith with an unveiled face and be transformed into his likeness (2 Cor. 3).

There is a powerful implication here. The implication is that believers have the opportunity to experience a kind of joy that overrides the ups and downs of life. You get a raise, experience

God's goodness in it. You lose a loved one, experience God's nearness in it. We of all people have the privilege of enjoying God's good gifts. But we do it with Him, not apart from Him.

**It is joyous good news that God did not come to us as an executioner in the incarnation. He could have, but instead he came as a helpless baby that we may experience not just his gifts, but Him. If we want to be a joyful people, then we have to embrace the joyous news for us and everyone else that God's presence is available to us through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.**

### **3) Sing praise to God**

**Main Point: God is the source and companion of all our joys.**

#### **Luke 2:13-14**

**13 Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:  
14 Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to people he favors!**

There is only one appropriate immediate response to the joyous good news that God has made His dwelling with man through Jesus. Sing! That's what the angels do. We don't have hardly any more information than this about the angels, but I imagine that the angels had been waiting in great anticipation for this moment. Their celebration makes the superbowl look like a tea party. It says there is a multitude, that means thousands upon thousands. Can you imagine thousands upon thousands of angels surrounding you as far as you could see singing with a purer voice than you have ever heard about the glory of God? I bet you would never forget the sight or sound.

There are loads of joy here. I believe there is also a lot of practical instruction for us. One of the best ways to enliven your own sense of joy with God is to sing. We see this happen throughout the psalms. But there is a certain kind of singing here that we are to emulate. It is praise. This Christmas season you might feel sad due to a separation of family and friends. I encourage you, sing and experience God with you in a kind of joy that transcends your circumstances.

It is significant that glory to God through song happens at Jesus' birth because that is also what will happen after his return. The Apostle John saw the glory of Jesus in a vision and fell down like everyone else. But in this vision he saw all kinds of people singing glory to God.

#### **Revelation 5:11-14**

**11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and also of the living creatures and of the elders. Their number was countless thousands, plus thousands of thousands.  
12 They said with a loud voice,  
Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered  
to receive power and riches  
and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and blessing!**

13 I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them say,

Blessing and honor and glory and power  
be to the one seated on the throne,  
and to the Lamb, forever and ever!

14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

If that is your future, then you will have joy that overrides any difficulty in life. Why? Because you know the end. And the end is just the beginning of being with Jesus forever.

I can't help but think about joy without also thinking about the end of the Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis. As Lucy walks through towards the new world where the light grows stronger and stronger she sees Aslan- the Christ figure.

### C.S. Lewis Quote

"And then she forgot everything else, because Aslan himself was coming, leaping down from cliff to cliff like a living cataract of power and beauty."

"And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.<sup>1</sup>

Joy with God is something like that.

**Three points of application as we close.**

## APPLICATION

1. Evaluate where you are living in fantasy VS reality.
2. Ask God to help you experience His presence in the joys of everyday life.
3. Sing to God for 10 minutes about His glory.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, C.S. The Last Battle. Pages 182-184.