

Date : 25 December 2022

Theme : Christmas cum Baptism Sunday

Topic : The good news of great joy of Christmas

Key verse : *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 Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10, 11*

Introduction

The pursuit of joy and happiness is common to all people. Great sums of money are spent every year in pursuit of this fleeting emotional experience. Yet, true joy is more than a human pursuit or emotion. It is grounded in a Person, a gift from heaven. The word *joy* in Scriptures is *chara* (=divine grace in Greek).

Listen to the angel's announcement to planet earth...

...I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people... A Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord... Luke 2:10-11

- The fountain head of great joy is from God in heaven (not earth)
- The fulfilment is because the Saviour is born
- The foundation is Christ the Lord

● How do we know that the angel was from God?

In *Luke 2:9* we read that the glory of the Lord shone when the angel appeared. He had come with a message from God – what He has said and what He is doing.

● Why would the shepherds be excited about news of someone else's baby?

We rejoice when a grandson is born or when a neighbour's daughter has graduated – people are eager to share their good news with family and friends.

But why would a bunch of shepherds be excited when a messenger appeared with news of a baby arrival? He wasn't their nephew or the son of one of them. Yet when they heard this news, they were ecstatic. They bolted to see Him. They even told everyone about this birth.

● Why did God choose the lowest members of society and entrusted them with the greatest truth of ages? Why not religious leaders, a king or a rich man? Why shepherds?

Shepherds are pragmatic and practical. They are not worried what others would think of them. They do not over-think and over-analyse to the point they would talk themselves out of it.

The *Luke 2* shepherds had the capacity to be amazed that God chose them to hear the news. How unworthy they must have felt, but how honoured. They were exuberant, overflowing with joy and, in their enthusiasm, reflected a bit of the glory of God that had enveloped them earlier.

1. Why is the Joy of Christmas so great?

When our joy is tied to circumstances – a surprising lottery win, a financial gain – it is easy to be joyful. When times are bad, our joy evaporates at the slightest bad news.

a) Christmas joy is great because of WHO Jesus is

- Jesus is the great God of the universe
Our circumstances change, our moods go up and down; however, God's character is trustworthy. Great joy is possible because God is faithful.
- Jesus is Creator of heavens and earth.
 - His Name is Jehovah (The Lord who saves)
Messiah (The Anointed One)
King of Kings (The Lord who reigns over Israel and the world)

- His origins are from ancient times *Micah 5:7* (He had existed before time began)
- He is God the Son (sent by God the Father with goodwill to mankind).

2. Why is the Joy of Christmas so gracious?

...glory to God in the highest and on earth goodwill toward men... Luke 2:14 KJV

...on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests... Luke 2:14 NIV

On that first Christmas, the angelic choir sang of Christ and the salvation process through Him. Hence when they saw the Creator paving the way of salvation, the angels rose to the highest notes of divine praise, singing...*Glory to God in the highest and on earth goodwill toward men... Luke 2:14*

a) Christmas joy is gracious because of WHAT Jesus has done

- God sent Jesus to extend goodwill toward men
Goodwill means to bless, not to judge the world.
 - To save us from the penalty of sin
 - To show us what God is like
 - How to be a person pleasing to God
- This goodwill is for all people, not just for the Jews.
We are also candidates to enter into God's great joy.

3. Why is the Joy of Christmas a gift?

The gift of the Saviour is an expression of God's love for us.

See what love is revealed to us through the birth of the Saviour of the world!

a) Christmas joy is a gift because the gift of pardon is offered to us.

...glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased...

Luke 2:14 ESV

- With whom is God pleased?
We have peace with God when we receive the gift of pardon through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Peace with God means we believe Jesus paid our great sin debt and God now accepts us. We do not have to face God as Judge. Jesus has secured our pardon with the Judge of the world.
 - We are no longer enemies of God. Our weight of guilt has been placed on Jesus on the Cross. We now live without fear of death and eternal death.
 - Because Jesus has done all that was necessary to make us right with God, God the Father adopts us as His own.

Application

To enjoy into joy

a) Come to the Source

True joy emanates from the Presence of God.

He is the Giver. There must be a Giver before we can receive joy.

b) Receive it gladly.

We can only receive it through faith in Jesus who is the Mediator between God and man.

c) Enlarge your capacity for joy.

- We enlarge our capacity when our faith is tested. Situations which are difficult or challenging reveal the true condition of our hearts. Trying situations such as a illness, family conflicts (which we are unable to resolve except through prayer), test our attitude toward God.
- Trying situations make us doubt God and His goodness. Without faith in God, it is impossible to please Him in our dark moments and the download of joy can be hindered. It is amidst difficult circumstances, struggles and persecutions that real joy and peace can be found in Christ. The Lord does not promise to take us out of hard times or difficult people; but He does promise to walk alongside us and bless us with His joy and peace.