

ADVENT 2010  
"All I Want For Christmas Is...JOY"  
Luke 2.8-14

I've asked a lot of people what they wanted for Christmas  
for sermon material for our Advent Series, "All I Want For Christmas IS ..."

A few said, I don't know.  
Hey maybe a new \$587,000 Jaguar would make them happy.  
They only make 250 of them each year and as added incentive,  
you only need to make a \$80,000 down payment.

If that seems a bit much,  
how about just getting that Jaguar owner a 8 ounce can of car wax...it's only \$3,400.

Now if the whole car thing isn't not what you're thinking  
then how about a gold and silver toilet seat inlaid with precious stones for only \$300,000.  
That would certainly be nice,  
or how about a \$27,000 pair of sunglasses, or a \$18,000 frisbee,  
or a \$10,000 yoyo, or even a \$12,000 mouse trap.

Or especially for you grandparents that want to spend another chunk of your retirement savings  
on your precious Grandbaby and don't know what else to get, how about a pacifier?

I know, I know, you think he or she already has enough pacifiers,  
but I bet she doesn't have a \$28,000 dollar pacifier.  
I haven't told Char about that one yet and besides Evie doesn't like pacifiers.  
Thank you Jesus.

I'm really not trying to pick on anybody.  
If you have the money and those things would make you happy, go for it.  
They might give you some happiness, but as the skit pointed out,  
those things would only give you temporary happiness, temporary joy.

Let's think for a minute about what brings you true and lasting joy.  
I'll bet being a grandparent comes close.

I loved Pastor Eldon's line last week  
about Grandparents bringing the gift of peace to their children's homes.

And I know that we bring the gift of joy to them as well and they bring joy to us.  
Especially when we get to hold them, or play with them,  
or feed them, or change them (grandma's really like that),  
or when we get to buy that something special,  
or see their big smile or that first tooth,  
or watch them discover their tongues,  
or experience the joy of eating something-like spaghetti.

That's pretty scriptural you know.  
Not necessarily the spaghetti part but having babies.

Many of you have experienced that great joy.

I know that and I can see that as you wait for your baby,  
hold those babies, and hug your kids in worship.

We read of the great joy experienced by some of the Bible characters having babies;  
beginning with patriarchs Abraham and Sarah,  
moving through Elkanah and Hannah, Ruth and Boaz,  
to Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Joseph and Mary,  
who had the baby that brings all of us great joy.

In Luke 2.10-12 the angel tells the shepherds of this joy,  
**"The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid.  
I bring you good news of great JOY that will be for all the people.  
Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you;  
He is Christ the Lord...  
You will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."**

Would the shepherds understand all of that? Do we?  
I'm not so sure they totally understood all of that,  
the baby stuff sure but God as a baby? God coming to them?

The Bible tells us the shepherds experienced it, they believed it, they shared it  
and all who heard it were **"amazed."**

Jesus himself told his disciples in John 15.11 that he came to bring joy,  
**"I have told you these things for a purpose;  
That my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature (complete or full)."**

And the writer of Hebrews tells us Jesus paid a huge price for our joy,  
**"He endured the suffering and the shame of the cross for the joy that would be found."** (Hebrews 12.2)

This great joy were talking about is powerful.  
Nehemiah 8.10 tells us, **"The joy of the Lord is your strength."**

Oswald Chambers says, "Joy is the nature of God in my blood."  
HW Sylvester adds, "Joy is the echo of God's life in us."  
Not only is God's joy our strength, the very nature or the echo of God's life in us,  
but according to George Goldtrap, joy improves our face value too.

Joy is one of the surest signs of God's presence in our lives.  
Walter Knight adds, "Joy is the flag that flies over the castle of our hearts  
announcing that the king is in residence today." Isn't that good.

Sometimes that flag is going to fly at ½ mass.  
It's when we experience death or divorce or some other great loss.

We genuinely grieve but can trust God's presence and promise, Psalm 30.5,  
**"The night of crying your eyes out gives way to days of laughter."  
"...weeping may remain for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."**

That flag of joy flies in the face of temptation and trials  
for our king has conquered sin and death and continues to push  
and promote spiritual growth, transformation, thanksgiving in our lives.

So if the joy of creator and redeemer of all resides in us,  
then how can we so easily get bored with worship,  
forget to pray, tire of service, dodge devotional time, and get down on life?

In other words what steals our joy?  
That's easy; the world full of ungodly values,  
the flesh full of self, and the devil is full of the devil and always at odds with God.

But maybe the better question is what do we let steal our joy?

In the skit, Jamie called joy a God-given gift.  
It is a God-given gift that births our attitudes and those attitudes then drive our actions.  
That is important to understand- joy is not dependent on one's feelings  
Joy is attitude drive our actions,

Think about it- if I'm grouchy or grumpy  
I'm usually not feeling very joyful but I could chose to be.  
And if I'm joyful-it's almost impossible for me to be grouchy or grumpy,  
but that I could chose to be as well.

Here is a great example.  
Joy and her husband came to the community humble and hopeful.  
He should have retired but he had to work.  
Their health wasn't good and work wasn't going so good.

He wasn't cool, he wasn't competent, and he couldn't keep up.  
Because of that and even because of their faith,  
they were ridiculed, picked on, and the butt of many ugly jokes.

The situation was pathetic  
but Joy, faithful to her God and faithful to her names sake,  
remained gentle, forgiving, hopeful, prayerful, and even joyful.

Actually Joy remained joyful, then and always.  
In grade school, she fell in love with Jesus, I mean literally fell in love with Jesus.  
That loved just oozed out of her, in her presence, in prayer, in song, and in service.

As a young girl she loved to sing.  
I'm guessing that, "I got that joy, joy, joy" was one of her favorite songs.

She loved to sing so she saved her pennies so she could buy records to play on their old phonograph.  
I know those are strange words to most of you. Dave found a picture for you.

Well, one day her father got mad, told her not to sing anymore, broke her records, and broke her heart.  
Her father had stolen her joy. Well, almost.  
Actually she didn't let her father steal her joy because it was a precious gift from her heavenly father.

She chose to be joyful and believed God's promise to the people in Isaiah 35.1 that we as, **"Wilderness and desert will sing joyously, the badlands will celebrate and flower like the crocus in spring, bursting into blossom, a symphony of song and color.**

Can you believe that? That Joy, like a desert was joyful in the midst of miserable circumstances? That is so totally unreal. That is out of this world. It is, isn't it?

John even tells us that, John 1.1-2, 14

**"...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. The Word was made flesh and made his dwelling among us."**

So, do you believe that? Do you believe you can be joyful in the midst of miserable circumstances?

Paul thinks so, He had Jesus in his heart and said he was content in all things, in Philippians 4.4-5 he says, **"Rejoice in the Lord always,"** and to make sure we get it right, he adds, **"Again I say rejoice."**

Unbelievable, here was a guy who shared the love of Jesus, sometimes I would guess with black eyes, a broken nose or bloodied lips, a bruised body, and a smelly robe marked and messed up with blood, dirt, dust, and whatever else might be lying on the ground?

Paul chose to be joyful.

Can we experience joy when we lose something special?

The who's of Who-ville would say yes, they had Christmas in their hearts. Remember the story, "How The Grinch Stole Christmas?"

The Grinch wanted to stop Christmas from coming so he packed his sled with all the presents, the ribbons, the wrappings, the tags, the tinsel, the trimming, and the trappings.

Then he headed for the hill, looked down and listened for the sound of sadness.

The sound wasn't sad! Why this sound sounded merry! It couldn't be so! But it was merry! Very!

The Grinch looked down at the town and every who down in Who-ville, the tall and the small were singing, without any presents at all.

He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! It came! Somehow or other it came, just the same!

And the Grinch, with his Grinch feet, ice-cold in the snow, stood puzzled, how could it be so? Christmas come without ribbons! It came without tags! It came without packages, boxes or bags!

Grinch puzzled three hours till his puzzler was sore.

Then the Grinch thought of something, something he hadn't thought of before.

Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from the store.  
 Maybe Christmas perhaps means a bit more. And what happened then...?  
 Well...in Who-ville they say, that the Grinch's small heart grew three sizes that day.

He whizzed with his load through the bright morning light and brought back the toys,  
 and the food for the feast, and he the Grinch, got to carve the roast beast.

The Who's of Who-ville had the Spirit of Christmas and the Grinch caught it.  
 It's probably better to say-it caught him.

Is it possible to experience joy in the midst of political suppression,  
 economic depression and religious oppression?

Marxist journalist Malcolm Muggerridge would say yes.  
 He ended up with Jesus in his heart.  
 He was pretty much an intellectual Grinch lost in the darkness of communism.

During the cold war he was assigned to write a feature  
 on the communist party and the church in atheistic Russia.

After interviewing some of the officials in the Kremlin,  
 he went to a Russian Orthodox Church service on Easter.  
 The church was packed.

At the end of the service the Priest shouted, "Christ has risen!"  
 The people shouted back, "He has risen indeed."

Meggerridge saw light, literally he saw the light,  
 he saw the **JOY** on the faces of the people  
 and realized reality of God's presence.  
 They had it right, Stalin had it wrong.

God had planted his flag of joy on the castle of Meggerridge's heart.

That is what Advent is about,  
 Seeing the light, receiving the light,  
 and God planting his flag of joy on the castle of your heart.

What more could you want for Christmas?  
 What more would the world want for Christmas?

Remember the angel said this joy was for all the people.  
 So let's sing that.  
 Let's stand and sing "Joy To The World"