

**Introduction:**

- Great joy. A few years ago I decided to surprise my dad on his birthday so I flew home to my parents. As we were pulling into the driveway I called him. As I am talking to him, we get out of the car, walk to the door all the while having a conversation. My mom quietly opens the door. My dad is sitting at his desk with his back to me talking. I'm walking still talking on the phone to him. I am now standing right behind him, and he says, "Wait just a minute son something is going wrong with my hearing aid." At that point he turns around and sees me! A bewildered look is followed by a face of incredible joy! "Hey son! You are here!" There is something about the arrival of someone you love that touches the heart!
- I also know that the moment you mention joy to hurting people they almost always retreat. The people who need this message today are more than likely to be the ones that 'tune' me out. Their pain will rule in their lives and they will close the door of Life in preference of isolation. If that is you, please stay with me. Walk with me through this message.

**I. The Time Was Right**

- A. When God is silent the time is right for joy! Four hundred years of silence. God had not spoken since Malachi.
  1. This means that God's people must rely upon the promises that have been given. One of those promises had to do with Messiah, Israel's deliverer!
  2. Hope deferred/prolonged makes the heart sick. And in some cases hope is totally dashed. I.e. Death, injustice, etc. "*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.*" (Proverbs 13:12, ESV)
  3. Even though God was silent, things prophesied by the prophets came to pass in that time. That is why the apostle Paul could write. "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*" (Galatians 4:4-5, ESV)
  4. When God is silent we tend to drift into seclusion, half heartedness, or total depravity because of not hearing His voice.
- B. When Times Are Dark the time is right/ripe for joy!
  1. "*the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*" (Matthew 4:16, ESV)
  2. When times are dark, joy is often lost or found diminishing. One of the key signs that you are in spiritual danger is the loss of joy. I.e. When canaries stop singing, miners start dying.
- C. What constitutes a dark time or region of death?
  1. Death of a loved one. That is an '*in the valley of the shadow of death*' time/experience.
  2. Times of extended sickness. Can put people in a dark place.
  3. Living in fear. Fear is dark. Fear of lack, fear of sickness, fear of rejection, fear of abandonment. Fear puts people in dark places. Dark places are not your destiny! We may pass through dark places but seek to get out!
  4. Living half-heartedly for Christ. Living for God half-heartedly will make you miserable. I think these are some of the most miserable people I know. It's dark.

- a) To live half heartedly is to live with one foot in the world and one foot in Christ. It is impossible to live that way and live in joy.
- b) The only cure is to repent and say, "YES!" to God, wholeheartedly. Go All In for God! (New Years Eve Service)
- 5. Some people seem to be naturally sad. Joy always seems elusive to them.
- 6. Others are sad because of physical reasons. I.e. A young mother gets tired and also deals with postpartum issues. People with chronic pain often live in darkness. Addictions cause people to live in darkness.
- 7. Your worse enemy is isolation, seclusion, love of natural darkness. You need God's touch of joy on you.
- 8. Dark and Light scripture. *"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation."* (Habakkuk 3:17-18, ESV) The prophet declares what he will do! I will rejoice, I will take joy in God my salvation.
  - a) I am not necessarily talking about that giddy, bubbly joy. I am not talking about upbeat feelings, or happy positive thinking.
  - b) I am talking about being satisfied in Christ. Rejoicing in Him. Letting the fruit of the Spirit, 'joy' have its work in us. It involves a conscious effort of looking at Him.

## II. Joy To The World

- A. In the Christmas accounts are a number of words expressing joy. Luke's account is absolutely filled with joy! Christmas is a holiday of joy. We sing the hymn, Joy to the World. Noel - shout of joy, good news. Here are some of the words you will find:
  - 1. The angel says to Zechariah Luke 1:14 *You will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice.*
    - a) Joy - χαρα - joy from the word grace
    - b) Gladness - αγαλλιασισ - gladness. It means 'to adorn', it is something put on. To also exult!
    - c) Rejoice - χαριο - to rejoice and be merry. Again it is a form of the word Xaris, grace.
  - 2. The angle says to Mary: *"Greeting favored one."*
    - a) Greetings! Comes from the word Charis - grace χαρισ
    - b) Favored one - comes from the word χαρω/charo
  - 3. John the Baptist leaps in the womb of Elizabeth! It is the response of the human heart to presence of God! Even if He is a baby in the womb! (he leaped for you! vs 42) The presence made John leap and Elizabeth to be filled with the Spirit! The presence of God did that. "If you ever find me living in darkness, please get me into our Lord's Presence!"
  - 4. Elizabeth blessed Mary - twice! Mary declares herself blessed and that generations would look at her.
    - a) Blessed - μακαρισουσιν - blessed. We spent much time on this word when we went through the Beatitudes. *"Blessed are you..."*
    - b) *"The special feature in the NT is use of the term for the distinctive joy which comes*

- through participation in the divine kingdom."<sup>1</sup> "The use of this word announces something important beyond its literal meaning. It's historical use was used of short sayings that proclaimed a happy release from the sorrows of life."<sup>2</sup> It is never used of God but used to describe the inner state of a man or nation that enjoys relationships with God. In the Beatitudes Jesus is telling us what it means to be happy not how to get happy.
- c) Verse 45 '*Blessed is she who believed.*' This word from is used as an adjective. Makarioi is used to describe the state of someone who already has... NOTE: It was Mary's faith that gave her access to the blessing or being in the state of joy, happiness, blessing.
- (1) So often the devil will work to keep us as prisoners of self-pity,
  - (2) He will help us self medicate, self isolate, and slowly self-destruct.
  - (3) Please, rise up and say NO! to his voice in your life. Mary said yes, in spite of what Joseph or family would do.
5. The neighbors rejoiced Lk 1:58
- a) Syncharo - to rejoice together. This is the expression of a symphony of grace!
  - b) When we sing with revelation together we create a symphony of grace! That sound ushers in joy for all to receive. But if you isolate, and chose not participate you will not see the glory of the Lord and the grace of God will elude you! Finding this grace is important to your healing.
6. The angels that visited the shepherds were praising God. Lk 2:8-20.
- a) aineo - it means to praise by telling. What the angel just announced a whole host of angels began to sing.
7. The shepherds go to Bethlehem and find Jesus.
- a) They return glorifying (doxa) and Praising (tell what God did) God.
8. Simeon blessed God
- a) Eulogy - to speak and say good things about God.
- B. "*the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*" (Matthew 4:16, ESV)
1. You have to look to the light. "*In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*" (John 1:4, ESV) In this life you have the choice of what you look at. If you have been living in darkness and suddenly a light appears look at it! Do not turn away. If you know that Jesus is the Light of the World look to Him, at Him. Do NOT turn away!
  2. If you have been living in a region of death and suddenly a light dawns, GET OUT! Do not stay there. Jesus is the Light of the world! Get out! He is shining on you. Jesus is your hope! Your only hope.

### III. Finding "Great Joy" Rare usage. If you study it, it takes you to powerful places.

<sup>1</sup>Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Abridged in One Volume* (p. 548). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>2</sup> ibid

- A. John Piper defines: *"Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world."* Three Parts:
1. Good feeling in the soul.
  2. Produced by the Holy Spirit
  3. Who causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the Word and in the world.
- B. But there is a place called **"Great Joy!"**
1. In both Luke 2:10 and Mt 2:10
    - a) Angels brought good news of Great Joy to shepherds!
    - b) Wisemen seeing the star rejoiced with "Great Joy!"
    - c) Jesus arrival is a cause for MEGA HAPPY!
      - (1) Megalain - huge, great, big, majestic, magnify!
      - (2) Charan - joy. From the root grace. To rejoice, be merry, be happy.
      - (3) MEGA HAPPY!!! Lord touch me with Mega HAPPY!
  2. Great Joy at the tomb of Jesus. The two Marys at the tomb. *"So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and **great joy**, and ran to tell his disciples."* (Matthew 28:8, ESV)  
Luk e24:52
  3. Acts 15:3 the conversion of the gentiles brought **great joy** to the apostles.
  4. When Solomon was made king. *"And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with **great joy**, so that the earth was split by their noise."* (1 Kings 1:40, ESV)
  5. Hezekiah restores passover. *"So there was **great joy** in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem."* (2 Chronicles 30:26, ESV)
- C. Great Joy, A place for all believers! *"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory **with great joy**,"* (Jude 24, ESV)

**Conclusion:**

- Wise men opened their treasure to Him. He in turn opened His treasure to us.
- Knowing Jesus, I know that He wants us to experience "Great Joy"
- There is no greater joy than knowing you are born again...born from above!

**Advent Readings**

Day Fifteen: Isa 11:6-10

Day Sixteen: Mark 13:32-37

Day Seventeen: Mt 25:1-13

Day Eighteen: Luke 21:25-36

Day Nineteen: John 12:20-36

Day Twenty: Titus 2:11-14

Day Twenty-one: Psalm 96:1-13

Day Twenty-two: Matthew 1:18-25

Day Twenty-three: Luke 2:1-20; Isa 52:7-10

Day Twenty-four: John 3:16-21; Romans 5:6-11; Eph 2:1-10 Day Twenty-five: Luke 2:1-20