



Morningside Church

Sermon Discussion Guide

Title: The Joy of Christmas

Date: December 22, 2024

Scripture Text: Luke 2:1-20

Notes:

We continue our focus on the observance of Advent. Advent's areas of focus help us keep our attention on Jesus during this time of year when we celebrate His birth. So far, we've looked at *hope*, *peace*, and *love*. This week our focus is *joy*. As the words of the popular carol goes "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!". As we celebrate Christmas, we can do so with a joyful heart. The source of our joy is Jesus. It is by His presence in our lives that we experience joy. Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness is an emotion tied to our circumstances. Joy is tied to our relationship with Jesus. 'Joy is the capacity to worship when the winds of adversity are raging.' Let's look at three examples of joy being missed and one example of it being experienced.

I. Herod: Authority Issue ([Matthew 2:1-12](#))

Herod was a king who ruled under the authority of Rome. He coveted power and was very suspicious of those who he felt may threaten his authority. When the magi (wise men) arrived in Jerusalem seeking the "King of the Jews", this got Herod's attention. He was familiar with the stories of a coming Jewish Messiah. Would this be someone who would contend for his position as king? Would the Jews be loyal to Him? What was he to do about this potential threat?

- When Herod summoned the magi, what did he ask them to do once they got to Bethlehem?
- What was Herod's true intention concerning the baby Jesus?
- Once the magi were able to present their gifts, how were they able to avoid Herod on their way home?
- According to the saying 'miss the forest for the trees', describes someone who gets so bogged down in the details they miss the big picture. Herod was so concerned about the perceived threat the Messiah had on his authority; he missed what it really meant for Jesus to be born.
 - What are examples of us missing the forest for the trees concerning our circumstances?
 - How can we allow our circumstances to take away our joy?
 - Herod let his priorities and expectations get in the way of realizing who Jesus was ([vs. 3](#)). How can we let circumstances and expectations get in the way of us experiencing joy?



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II. Religious Leaders – Apathy (Matthew 2:4-6)

Even though the religious leaders (chief priests and scribes) knew the Bible, they missed the joy of Jesus because it appears they were too focused on appeasing Herod and maintaining the status quo. ‘Let’s not rock the boat’. It had been 400 years since God spoke in the Old Testament. The religious leaders had their own routine and had developed their own expectation of who Messiah would be. The Bible had become rote and routine.

- What does the term ‘familiarity breeds contempt’ mean?
- What does it look like for the Bible, Sunday worship, and even prayer time becoming rote and routine?
- What is the danger of these items becoming rote and routine?
- What are things you can do to keep God’s word fresh and new for you?

III. Innkeeper – Activity (Luke 2:7)

While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem Jesus was born. As a newborn, He was placed in a manger, (a nearby animal feeding trough) instead of a cradle because regular accommodations were not available. Where was the innkeeper? He is not mentioned in scripture. He may not have been there because he was too busy. Busy tending to his properties, busy making money. All important things to him, but because of his busyness, he missed Jesus.

- What are things that you can be busy with?
- Is your busyness typically accompanied by stress and anxiety?
- Not all busyness is a problem. Sometimes there are things that need to be done. But what does it mean if you must put off your time with Jesus because of your busyness?
- How can busyness affect our joy?

IV. Shepherds – Appropriate (Luke 2:20)

There were shepherds in the fields watching over their flocks at night. In an instant they were greeted by an angel with a joyful announcement that Christ the Lord was born. Immediately, the shepherds went to see the Child. All was just as the angel had said. They eventually went on their way glorifying and praising God. They experienced joy because they had experienced Jesus. Their response was not one of selfishness, comfort, or busyness, but total acknowledgement of God!

- How would you describe joy?
- What is the difference between joy and happiness?
- How can joy extend beyond our circumstances?
- How can our experience of joy impact others for Jesus?
- What can you do to experience the joy of Jesus on a more regular basis?