

“Great Joy”

Luke 2:10

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This is week two of our *Good News* series and in this series we are simply highlighting the message the angels delivered to the shepherds that were keeping watch over their sheep all those years ago in the region of Bethlehem.

Luke records in **Luke 2:10** – “**And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”**”

Last week our focus was on the “good news” portion of that verse. This week we are tackling the second portion of that verse...it’s also the title of the message today: **GREAT JOY**

Now, you can’t hardly think about Christmas without thinking of the word “joy”. They are almost synonymous with one another. Think of it as it relates to the songs we sing this time of the year. How many of the Carols of Christmas that we love have “joy” as it’s theme?

- *Joy to the World* – “repeat that sounding joy, repeat that sounding joy”
- *O Come All Ye Faithful* – what’s the very next words? “Joyful and Triumphant!”
- *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* – “O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy!”
- *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* – “glory to the newborn King – Joyful all ye nations rise!”

We sing about joy in the songs of Christmas. We see it in the way we decorate our homes this time of the year...the lights and the trees. We hear it in people’s voices when they say, “Merry Christmas”. We FOR SURE see it in our children’s face’s this time of the year.

illus. Christmas Spectacular – I asked our guys to pull some pics of children watching the show – tell me if these faces aren’t just FULL of joy! (**SHOW PICS**)

Christmas and joy go hand and hand. And we talked about this last week, at its root, the message of Christmas is a birth announcement and what’s a more joyous occasion than the announcement that a baby is on the way!

What is seen, read about and experienced throughout birth narrative of Christ is joy:

- The wise men, when they came to the place where Jesus was, the star they had been following the scripture says (Matt. 2:9) they saw it resting over the place where the child was and listen to:

Matt. 2:10 – “When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”

- In Luke’s gospel, he writes when Mary who was pregnant with Jesus visited Elizabeth for the first time, who was pregnant with John the Baptist . Listen to:

Luke 1:44 – “For behold (Elizabeth says), when the sound of your greeting (Mary) came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.”

What made the angels birth forth in singing “Glory to God in the Highest”? What caused those shepherds after they went and saw the infant Jesus lying in a manger leave “glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard (Luke 2:20).

In both cases, it was that they were FULL of joy! Why? Because this is what the good news message brings. The angels said so.

Again: **Luke 2:10 – “And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”**

We looked at this “good news” in detail last week. We talked about the context surrounding it...the content of this good news. If you missed last week, I really encourage you to go back online and listen to it.

The “good news of great joy that will be for all the people...it’s spelled out for us in the VERY next verse exactly what’s the cause of all this joy!

Luke 2:11 – “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Now, I mentioned it briefly last week, needs to be noted again here. Three titles given to Jesus in this one verse. Nowhere else in scripture are these titles used together like this. This is the ONLY place.

And in these titles we see exactly WHY we can have this GREAT (the word is “mega”) JOY that’s mentioned here. We have the title:

1. “Savior” – it’s also the word “deliverer”. More on that in just a moment.
2. “Christ” – this is not the last name of Jesus, this is a title regarding his Messiahship...he is the “anointed one” of God – that’s what Christ means!
3. “Lord” – he is sovereign...the all-ruling King of the universe who is worthy of our all. It’s majesty in a manger.

These three titles, we are going to look at in detail today and discover in them WHY this “good news” announcement brings such GREAT JOY. Let’s look at “Savior” first.

1. Savior – We have a God who saves

Think on that long enough and that will bring some joy! The fact that we have a God who saves!

The very name Jesus means to save. **Matt. 1:21** – “**She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save the people from their sins.**”

This is the MAJOR reason Jesus came to this earth. He would say of himself in **Luke 19:10** – “**For the Son of Man came to seek and to (emphasis here) save the lost.**”

We have a Savior in Jesus and this should cause great joy to rise from within. Those two words “Jesus” and “Savior” they just go together...in fact they are nearly synonymous with one another.

“Jesus” comes from the Hebrew “Joshua” which means “Yahweh saves” – God saves. We have in Jesus a God who saves! This was the announcement made all those years ago to those shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem.

Now, Israel was familiar with this word “Savior” on a number of fronts. It was a common word used in the vernacular of that day. There’s no doubt the shepherds would have known the surface meaning of what the angel who brought the announcement was saying.

The Old Testament translated this word as the word “deliverer” and their history is full of “deliverers” who brought salvation on their behalf.

- Moses “delivered” his people and saved them out of slavery and from the hands of Pharaoh.
- Numerous judges were raised up and helped deliver and save God’s people from oppression or captivity.
- This word “deliverer” or “savior” has a military connotation to it and was used of kings who brought forth victory for Israel and saved God’s people from death and destruction.
- Just about every prophet that ever spoke a word from God promised that one day in the future there was a Savior that God would send and he would come and ultimately deliver them.

And that night the angels made this “good news” announcement, God was coming through on his promise. This baby that was being born was the “Savior” of the world.

They would not only have been familiar with this term “Savior” because of its rich usage within their history, but also because at the time of the birth of Jesus, there was a man that had taken this title for himself and that was Caesar!

He would have been revered as the one who saves...at least that is what he proclaimed and promoted himself as. He was the “Divine Augustus”...and what he said went.

He’s the reason Mary and Joseph are in Bethlehem in the first place! Recall the words of Luke as the birth narrative begins.

If you’re looking for an awesome Christmas tradition to begin with your family sit them down on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day and read Luke 2. It begins with a decree from Caesar!

Luke 2:1-5 – “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.”

Caesar could do anything he wanted! “Savior” was his title! He claimed this for himself! But to those shepherds and the people of Israel, he was anything but a Savior. He did nothing but suppress them...tax them...hold them down and hold them back.

Israel knew what a “Savior” was and they knew Caesar wasn’t him! They were waiting...they were dreaming for the day that God would come through on his promise and deliver them. They were waiting for this!

Illus. Waiting – Btw, is there anything worse than waiting? Kids waiting to open presents...adults waiting in traffic...waiting, waiting, waiting.

Just want to encourage you that if you are in a waiting season, don’t waste your wait! God’s doing things in your heart in the waiting seasons of life that he can’t get accomplished in any other way!

You keep waiting and just know with confidence that he is working...he is preparing...he is getting things ready! The people of God were waiting for years for a “Savior”...someone to deliver them!

Now, we know looking back these people were waiting on and looking for a political Savior. One who deliver them from the oppression of the Roman Empire. They thought the “Savior” God was sending would set up his earthly rule and reign...and listen, one day God will do that, but this wasn’t what Jesus’s first coming was about.

He didn’t come the first time to bear the sword. He came the first time to go to the cross. His saving and his deliverance would be spiritual in nature!

And the saving work of Christ would encompass MUCH MORE than the shepherds could have ever imagined...and isn’t that just like God! He ALWAYS does MORE than what we could ever ask, think or imagine.

The Life Application Bible, in its notes on this verse says: **"Some of the Jews were waiting for a Savior to deliver them from Roman rule; others hoped the Christ (Messiah) would deliver them from physical ailments. But Jesus, while healing their illnesses and establishing a spiritual Kingdom, delivered them from sin. His work is more far-reaching than anyone could imagine. He offers us more than temporary political or physical changes – he offers us new hearts that will last for eternity."**

Illus. Christmas Spectacular - Jesus is Savior. He is a God who saves us from our sin. It's been incredible after each performance of the Christmas Spectacular to share the gospel with all those in attendance.

And after each performance, I have the privilege to share in as simple as terms as possible this message...it's that SIN is THE issue...it's the problem (Share gospel).

And then to see the lights come on (**SHOW PIC**). It's remarkable...talk about joy! You should see families going to get a Bible...people who just asked Jesus to save them from their sin...their smile is as big as it gets!

Illus. Decisions – So far we have seen 566 first time decisions for Christ through the Christmas Spectacular!

I don't know who originally coined it, but I love this quote: **"If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior."**

Listen: In Jesus, we have a God who saves...it's cause for "great joy"!

If the joy of your life is a little low this morning, just take some time to go back to your salvation experience. Remember what Christ did! (1989).

Or go share your faith with someone and watch them consider the claims of Christ and then receive him into their life. I assure you, your joy will return – (More joy in heaven when one comes to know Jesus! When one person gets saved all of heaven rejoices!)

Another cause of joy is a result of what is contained in that second title that the angels announce concerning Jesus. They call him:

2. Christ – We have a God who keeps his promises

The word "Christ" is a term that means "anointed one". In the Hebrew it's "Messiah". They can be used interchangeably.

In the Old Testament we see often a king or a priest being anointed with oil, symbolizing the office they are called to or the mission they will fulfill.

The Old Testament prophets spoke of the “Messiah” – not “a anointed one”, but “THE anointed one” who would hold the office of King forever and his mission would be to rule the world.

Now the exact number of prophecies in the Old Testament is debated among scholars, but the general consensus is that there are somewhere around 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that point to the first coming of Jesus.

Some of the prophecies are repeated. Some we see in “types”...this is a prophetic symbol of a person or thing in the Old Testament that points to Christ...resembles Christ.

Of the 300 prophecies, 10 or so are fulfilled in the birth narrative. We mentioned last week:

- Micah 5:2 – given 700 years before Jesus would ever be born were told that he would be born in Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2 – “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”

- 900 years before he would ever be born to Mary, the prophet Isaiah in Is. 7:14 noted that the “anointed one” would be born of a virgin and that he would be called Immanuel!

Isaiah 7:14 – “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

- 2,000 years before Jesus was born, God told Abraham that in him the nations of the earth would be blessed and so all knew the Messiah...the Christ would be born in the lineage of Abraham (Gen. 12) and more specifically he would come through the line of Jacob (Gen. 28 and even more specifically, he would come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49).

Just read the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew one and Luke three and if its anything, it’s a genealogy that does nothing but show God fulfilling promise after promise.

When the angel says that Jesus is Christ is the Messiah...the anointed one of God...that he is “Christ” - if you read the fine print, here’s what it would say: **“I KEEP MY PROMISES”**

This is what we should glean when we read the word “Christ” or Messiah”. We serve a God who keeps his promises!

Listen, we live in a broken world. We live in a world where people break their promises all of the time. It can be as distant as some politician we voted for that didn’t keep his promise. Or it could be as close as a spouse that betrays you. Or a parent that walked out on you...or a boss that lied to you...

We know what it is to have someone not keep their promise...the pain that comes with...the sense of disillusionment and despair. But, God...he's ALL-TOGETHER different!

And if Christmas is anything, it should be a perpetual reminder to us that God keeps his promises! This should bring GREAT joy! To know that we serve a God who KEEPS his promises!

I know for some, Christmas is tough...we're talking about it being all about joy today, but the reality is for you, it's a reminder of the loss of a loved one. For some, the winter months and Christmas season can be a very lonely time...not joyous, but rather dark and depressing. It's hard to have any joy, let alone "great joy" sometimes. And we understand that...

Illus. Day of Comfort – It's why on December 20th, we are hosting what we are calling a "Day of Comfort" (**SHOW SLIDE**). As a church we want to be here for you, to serve you and pray for you, and hopefully in the midst of the heaviness you are feeling, salve it with the ministry of presence and the promises of God. That's what this "Day of Comfort" is all about.

And if you have lost a loved one in this past year or simply struggling with some sort of loss, we want to invite you to our chapel from 12:00-7:00 – you can come anytime during that time frame that day and we will have pastors in our chapel, ready to do nothing but sit with you, pray with you and encourage you.

You can come and sit...pray...think on the promises of God. We'll have candles there that you can light in your loved one's honor. It's come and go...but we want to invite anyone struggling in this time to come to this "Day of Comfort".

And again, our goal is to simply be a ministry of presence in your life and our prayer is that in that hour you will be reminded of the great promise of God. Promises like:

Heb. 13:5 – "...for he said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Matt. 11:28 – "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Isaiah 26:3 – "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."

Psalms 34:18 – "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

1. He is Savior – We have a God who saves.
2. He is Christ – We have a God who keeps his promises.

A third reason this "good news" announcement is "of great joy" is because of that final title that is given.

3. **Lord** – We have a God who reigns

It should birth great joy within us to know that in Jesus, the real sovereign was now on the scene. I love how one writer I read put it: This (incarnation) is an “invasion upon the Roman claims of authority.”

Luke, up to this point in his gospel has used the word, “Lord” more than twelve different times...each time he uses it, he uses it to describe God, the Father – his work, his actions.

But, here he brings this term and applies it to the baby that would be found in the manger. His majesty in a manger – he is Lord! This baby is not like any other baby. He is the sovereign God of the universe. This God governs the affairs of men.

Caesar isn't there UNLESS God puts him there. Who causes him...puts it in his heart to call for a census so that Mary and Joseph get to Bethlehem? That's NOT coincidence, that's an exhibition of his LORDSHIP.

Who creates and causes the star to shine at that specific moment in history so that wisemen...the magi see it and make their way to see this newborn king? Only a LORD...only a SOVERIEGN could do this.

Written across the pages of the Christmas story, you could write the word LORD in gigantic capital letters – he is in complete control and everything that is taking place is filtering through his holy hand...part of his divine plan.

And listen to me...just as he is LORD over the Christmas story, he is LORD over your life!

EVERYTHING that is happening, is happening for a reason – whether it's a result of our own behavior and choices OR it may be the result of someone else's behavior or choices. What we are going through may not be anyone's fault! It could just be the result of living in a fallen world.

WHATEVER it is we're going through or facing, his lordship means can know with confidence God is working his plan and nothing takes place in our life without him allowing it...without him signing off on it!

He is sovereign! He is Lord and because of this whatever is taking place in our life and whatever we may be up against, we can have joy! Just think about it:

- NOTHING is outside our God's realm...
- NOTHING is outside of our God's authority...
- NOTHING is too hard for him or difficult for him...
- NOTHING is taking him by surprise and...
- NOTHING is beyond his control...

Jesus is Lord. We have a God who reigns. The question is, “Is he reigning in your life? Have you submitted your life to his lordship?”

A sovereign not only deserves but demands we bow the knee. He is Lord and the way to salvation is believing this! But NOT just believing it inwardly but confessing it outwardly. This is what “confession” is all about.

Rom. 10:9-10 – “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

To confess with the mouth Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not...in the time of the Bible, that could cost you. And following him as Lord today...well, that could cost you too.

I’ve thought a lot about the “costs” associated with Jesus being Savior, Christ and Lord this week allow me for a moment to share a brief testimony regarding this that I think will help if you’re facing difficulty, having a hard time making a decision and don’t know what to do.

Let me share with you how knowing Jesus as “Savior, Christ and Lord can help you and how it really does bring “great joy”.

Illus. View of Call – It was one year ago this week, that I preached here in view of call.

Interestingly enough, I preached this same passage of scripture in a message called “Breaking News”. And I used it as a directional message of sorts trying of course to teach this passage but also share with you where I would try to lead the church should you call me as your pastor.

And I said, I wanted the ministry God has given me and our church to be about:

- “Good news” – that the gospel message would be what we are all about all the time...
- “Great joy” would be the description of our church. As people get to know us and be around us that they would see Champion Forest as a place that just exudes joy...
- “For all the people” – we’ll talk about this more next week, but I just mentioned that my prayer is that we would continue to be a local church that looks like...reflects the Kingdom of God...

In returning to this passage on this year anniversary of you voting me in...I was worried about that 70% by the way, but we did it!

It’s been amazing to think about HOW God brought me here. 20 years in Dallas...I thought I would spend my entire life and ministry there. But then, you Champion Forest...your search committee led by God called me.

And I can remember the wrestle. Moving my life...starting over with relationships...rocking my kids worlds, especially my older two...leaving behind a church that raised me...gave me my first shot in ministry.

How was I ever going to make this decision? As I've thought about it reflected on it...obviously, God answered prayer and led the whole way. But in thinking about it...what we see here as a cause for great joy – this was what helped me get here.

- Jesus is Savior. He saved me from my sins and is worthy of my life. I had to go wherever he calls.
- Jesus is the Christ. He is a promise keeping God and can I tell you he has been so faithful to me and kept his promises to me.

I told someone once we made the decision to come to Champion Forest, my life has been like walking through a Target – the doors just open...I haven't had to push a one!

- Jesus is Lord. He knew I needed to be here. And he did what he had to do to push me out of my nest in Dallas and he sovereignly on his timetable opened the door for me to serve here.

And can I just say, it's been the most incredible year. I've never felt more right in the center of God's will than I do right now and I've never had this much joy – serving this church, alongside our great team. I can't believe I get to do what I get to do.

Listen: If you have a tough decision before you and you don't know what to do. Or maybe you are facing something that you just don't understand and the future seems unclear...let the fact that Jesus is Savior, Christ and Lord comfort your heart and be your guide.

He has proven to me and placed me and led me in such a way that there is NO denying for me that he is Savior, Christ and Lord.

And I ask you in closing today, "What about you?" Can you say the same thing? Or someone say about you, "there is no denying that Jesus is Savior, Christ and Lord of your life.

If he's not, this is where it starts. And it starts by bowing your heart and bowing your knee to Jesus.

Would you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.