

The Real Joy of Christmas

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[0 : 00] I want to ask you how are you feeling today? Are you feeling any different to how you feel on any other Sunday? Are you feeling happy because of Christmas?

If so, I want to ask you why. Think about it. Why are you feeling happy today, if you are feeling happy? Why? What is the cause of that happiness? Boys and girls, I imagine it's got something to do with presents.

Am I right? How many boys and girls have already opened presents today? Put up your hand. Okay. And is that maybe the source of some of your happiness?

Well, presents do make us happy. I got some presents this morning and it made me happy. Other things on Christmas also make us happy. One of the things that makes me the happiest on Christmas Day is my mother's trifle.

It's such a hit that she normally makes a whole bowl for me and my brother separately so we don't fight over it. Even though we're grown up men, we still fight over the trifle. And that makes us happy.

[1 : 06] And also, having people that we love, maybe we haven't seen for a while, we get to spend time with. These things also make us happy. These are the things in life that cause happiness in us. And happiness is an emotion we all want to feel because it's great to feel happy, isn't it?

And there are certain things that cause us to feel happy. Presents and people and good food. But on Christmas, we get to have all of those things at the same time. We get to have a lot of things that make us happy, but all at the same time.

And that's often why people think Christmas is associated with joy. Because joy is a word you see all over in the shops and everywhere. Christmas season is a season associated with joy.

And we think that's because of the things that make us happy on the day. But do you know that's not the traditional reason and not the real reason Christmas is known as a season of joy.

There's something else about Christmas that people often miss, but that has power to give even deeper and greater joy than all these other things. And it has the power to give real joy even to those people without the gifts and without the food and without loved ones around them.

[2 : 22] There is a way that Christmas can give us a deep and lasting joy. And that is the joy of good news. Because good news is something that can also give us joy.

Good news is a fact about the future that's able to give us real joy now in the present. Like maybe, boys and girls, if you knew what you were getting for Christmas before Christmas, right?

I don't know if you did, but if you knew what you were getting, then you were waiting for it and you were having real joy even before you got the thing, right? Because you had news of what you were getting.

So you're able to have joy now because of something you haven't yet got. That's what good news does, if it's real news. It's the same as if, you know, your family is getting a puppy in a month, say. And you start feeling really joyful and excited now even before you meet the puppy. Or maybe you're going on a big family trip in a few months.

[3 : 24] And you start to feel joy now because of that news even before you go. That's what the joy of good news is. And in the same way, the real joy of Christmas is not so much from the presents and the food that you might enjoy later.

The real joy of Christmas is from the news. The news that Christmas brings. That's able to bring joy to anybody no matter how little they have now.

And that news is what the angels announced. To the poor shepherds who had very little and they were out there in the fields. You know the story. And the angels came and we know the verse.

But I want you to notice what they said again. Luke 2 verse 10. It was the angel before the big lot of angels came. The single angel came and he said to them.

Now angels, by the way, are not the cute little things that are hanging on your Christmas tree. In the Bible, angels are heavenly news announcers. They're news readers, but not the kind of news readers you see on TV or the internet.

[4 : 28] These are cosmic news readers that come whenever there's news from heaven to announce to earth. And that's why the first thing angels typically say is, don't be afraid because they are terrifying.

In fact, you see in verse 9, the angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But verse 10, the angel said to them, and I want you to notice what he said, don't be afraid for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

So the angel came to bring good news which can bring joy for all people. And that's what I want us to spend a few minutes looking at this morning. Firstly, what is the good news? What is this good news of Christmas that's able to make us happier than presents and trifle?

Is there such a thing? Well, yes, there is. And this is what the news is. It's the next verse. So the angels summarize what the news is they came to bring.

And this is the good news of Christmas. This is what it's all about. Here it is. Verse 11. Today, in the city of David, a Savior was born for you.

[5 : 37] Who is the Messiah? The Lord. Some Bibles might have just, who is Christ the Lord? But that's a title. That's not Jesus' surname. That's a title.

And it's also known as the Messiah. That's the Hebrew for it. And that's the good news. The good news of Christmas is that a Messiah has been born in our world. Okay? So what does that mean? If that's the good news, we need to understand what it means. What's a Messiah? Messiah. We need to get our heads around this. The prophets in the Old Testament spoke of this Messiah as someone that God was going to send, who was specially appointed by God to be the one who's going to fix the world.

Okay? That is how big and profound this idea of the Messiah is. God has appointed someone who's going to actually fix our world.

And that is great news because we all know something's wrong with the world. Even if things are going well, even on a day that we have a lot of joy, deep down inside us, we know something's still wrong.

[6 : 52] And that's why not everyone has joy. And that's why even the joy we have doesn't last. Because there's something wrong with the world. It's not working properly.

Okay? If you get a... Maybe you've been in this situation before. You get a Christmas present. You unwrap it. It's the toy that you've been looking forward to. Or it's the device, the iPhone, whatever. And you unwrap it.

You press the power button. But it becomes apparent something's wrong. The thing's not working properly. The screen's fuzzy. Or the robot only walks in circles.

Or something like that. And you know, okay, this is not how it was designed to be. And you know right away this is not how it is. And you feel quite disappointed, right? When you unwrap a present and you put the batteries in and then it's not working properly.

Well, that's our world. Our world is not working properly. It's like a gift that's been given but we realize that it's malfunctioning.

[7 : 50] The thing is, though, in this case, it's not a problem with the designer or the manufacturer. It's rather because we didn't put the batteries in properly. We didn't follow the instructions.

Because what happens when you get something and it comes with instructions but you don't read the instructions? Boys and girls, what might happen? It might break, right? If you don't use it like the instructions tell you to.

It breaks. And the sad fact is that the greatest gift that we've ever been given, much better than toys or iPhones or anything that you can get this Christmas, the greatest gift you've been given is life itself.

And the sad thing is that it's broken. And when we actually get around to reading the instructions afterwards, if you ever get around to reading the instructions, then we realize we're the ones who broke it.

But that's what makes the news of Christmas such good news because the good news of the Messiah means that God has sent someone to fix what we broke. That's, in summary, what the good news of Christmas is.

[9 : 06] God has sent someone. He has come into this world and His mission, the reason He came is to fix everything that we've broken.

Our lives, our worlds. That is the news of Christmas that is meant to bring us great joy if we understand and believe it. Because what greater joy could we have than the good news that things are going to get fixed, that our lives can be fixed, that this world can be fixed.

That's the news of the Messiah. That's what it means. The one that God has been telling us about for thousands of years has now come. He has come into our world.

And His mission to fix things has already begun. But that was 2,000 years ago. And so why isn't it fixed yet?

Have you ever wondered that? Have you ever? Because Christmas, every Christmas, we hear the news of the great Messiah who's come to bring peace to the nations, who's come to fix the world. But why hasn't it happened yet?

[10 : 12] Why isn't it fixed? When I look around, things are still broken. And that, by the way, is why many people ignore the news of Christmas. That's why many people only come to church on Christmas Day, and then the rest of the year, they're not really worried about it.

They're not really concerned about what the Bible says, the instructions for life. They're not really concerned about this idea of the Messiah, because, well, if it was true, surely it would be fixed now, right? That's why many people ignore the news.

They think it's fake news. But those people actually forget something about good news. Because typically, with good news, is that when we get it, it also requires a time of waiting.

We hardly ever get good news that immediately gives us the thing the news is about. It always requires a time of waiting first. So, boys and girls, tell me, who knew a few weeks ago already what you were getting for Christmas?

Put up your hand. Do we have any? Okay. There's a few. Okay, there's a few people who knew what they were getting for Christmas. Now, you had that good news, and you could look forward to it, and you looked forward to December the 25th, but it meant that you had to wait.

[11 : 20] And for, I remember, as a child, if I knew what I was getting, December was like an eternity for me, to wait. The better the thing we're getting, it seems the longer we have to wait for it.

Or, like with any good news, that's the case. The better the news, the longer it seems that we have to wait. It seems like an eternity. I don't know if you boys and girls were told that you're getting a puppy, and you had to wait for it, but you were looking forward to it.

Or, when your parents told you they were going on a trip, you had to wait for it. You didn't get it right away. That's the nature of good news, and it's exactly the same with the news about the Messiah, the good news of Christmas.

That is the news that we're meant to get all our joy from today, but it's news that requires a time of waiting. Now, you might be asking, well, why?

Why do we have to wait? If this is such good news that God has given us and prepared us for in the prophets and proved to us that He's doing it through the coming of Jesus into our world, why the wait?

[12 : 30] Why is He still making us wait for it? Well, it's as we read the Bible, of course, that we find out. We find out why we have to wait for God to fix the world, for Jesus to complete His task that He came to fulfill.

And the reason is because God's plan to fix the world starts by fixing us. God's plan to fix the world starts by fixing us, and that's really why we're waiting for the world to be fixed.

Because before that can happen, we need to be fixed. Because, you know, while we know something is wrong with the world, we also actually, all, I know, we all know, deep down inside, there's something wrong with us.

Even though we might not know what. But again, it's the Bible that tells us. Because you see, the Bible isn't just instructions that came with the present. The Bible is also God's revelation of His plan to fix the world through Jesus, and why we're waiting, and why we need to be fixed first.

And this is what it says in Romans 1, verse 25. This is the reason. This is what is actually, if you want to know what's wrong with us deep down inside, what is the core of the human problem?

[13:55] Well, here it is. Romans 1, verse 25. We worshipped and served what has been created instead of the Creator. Now let me explain what that means.

Think of all the gifts you get on Christmas. Think of all the gifts you may have already received this morning, or yesterday, if you unwrapped gifts on Christmas Eve. Now, if you had to choose, what would you rather have?

The gifts, or the person that gave you those gifts? Boys and girls, all the gifts your parents give you, would you rather have the gifts or your parents?

I can see a lot of kids actually thinking hard about that one. But obviously, maybe you would think for a while, but obviously you would choose your parents because they're the ones that gave you the gifts.

The relationship with the giver is always more important than the gift, isn't it? It would never make sense to trade them for the gifts. But the Bible says that's exactly what we've done with God.

[15:07] We've traded the giver for the gifts. Like a spoiled child who gets a gift, doesn't even look at who it's from, doesn't read the card, rips the paper, grabs the gift and runs away.

We've all done that with God, the Bible says. We've taken the life and the gifts He's given us, we forgot who gave them to us and why and we haven't even read the card that was attached to the gifts.

That's what the Bible says is the problem with all of us. But that is precisely also why we can't find lasting joy with the gifts themselves.

You know, we try. We take all the gifts, we forget the giver and we try to get joy out of the things we have and the people we have and the gifts we have and we never find lasting joy and we always want more.

And no matter how many things we have, whether you're poor, whether you're rich, there's still that missing piece. And the reason is because the joy that we were made to experience was never meant to be in the gifts.

[16:18] It was meant to be in the giver. The joy that we were made to experience was only ever meant to be satisfied in God Himself rather than His gifts. Listen to how Psalm 16 verse 11, someone, David, who wrote this psalm understood this and this is how he put it.

Psalm 16 verse 11, In your presence is abundant joy and at your right hand are eternal pleasures. This is someone who realized that all the joy that He's been made for and that we typically look for things to fulfill can only actually be fulfilled in the presence of God, knowing the giver Himself.

And that is why the news of Christmas brings joy because it reestablishes that connection, that broken connection with God. Because, listen again to the news of the angels, something again that we often skip over because we hear it so often at Christmas, this is their news.

Today in the city of David, a Savior was born for you who is the Messiah, the Lord. A Savior. So that news of Christmas that those angels brought is that the person who's come into the world is not just the Messiah who's going to fix the world, but He's the Savior who can fix you, who can wipe your sins away and bring you back into relationship with the giver of all gifts.

[17:56] And He did that, of course, as He grew up and went to the cross to die an atoning death for our sins, to restore our relationship with God, to wipe our sins away so that we can have real joy, not from the things that we have, nice as those are, but from the giver of all things.

And the source of all real joy. Not just the joy of knowing that your sins against God are forgiven and that life has been restored and that you have access to life again, but also the joy of knowing the news of the Messiah that this world will be fixed.

It will. And when we look around in the world and we look at all the problems, what deep joy there is to know that God has already put into plan, put into motion, a plan that's going to fix everything when the Messiah arrived in this world.

And if you are fixed, if your sins are forgiven, you can be part of that fixed, restored world and experience the eternal pleasures that God has always planned for you to experience.

That is the good news of great joy. So as I close, I want to ask you again, how are you feeling today? Why are you happy?

[19:11] Yeah, the presents are great. My mom's trifle is awesome. The people are great to have around. These are all nice things. But what should make you happier than all of them is the news that God has a plan to fix everything.

And it's already started. That's the good news of Christmas. And if that is not where you find your joy today, you need to read the news.

Not the news on the internet, but the news that's in here. The news that God has revealed of the Messiah and what His arrival means for the future of this world and for you.

Do you know that news? Do you understand that news? Have you responded to that news in your life? It's one piece of news you cannot ignore.

Have you responded to it? If not, if you don't know how to respond to it, then I urge you to come back for the series that's going to start next week Sunday, responding to the call.

[20 : 21] But if you have, if you've responded to the news and you've followed Christ, then you need to choose where your joy is going to come from today.

You need to choose where your joy is going to come from this Christmas. You know, in the New Testament, the apostles continually urge us, this refrain, over and over again in their letters, is the command to rejoice.

And that means to have joy. Which means joy is a choice. Joy is not just something that automatically comes to us. We need to choose to have joy and Christians need to choose where your joy comes from.

Is it going to come from the things you have? Which are great, especially on Christmas, but they don't last. always your joy today going to come from the best news that human ears have ever heard.

The news that the angel announced. Today, in the city of David, a Savior was born for you who is the Messiah, the Lord.

[21 : 29] Let's pray. Oh Lord God, we thank you that you have a plan to fix our world. We so often forget, even if we've heard that news, we get so caught up in the brokenness of the world and we despair.

And so we thank you that on this Christmas day we can remember again that you have a plan to fix this world, to fix everything, to fix us. And that you have already put it into motion when Jesus came. We thank you for the good news that the angel announced. We thank you for the good news that we have in our Bible. We thank you that you've given us instructions for life.

And even though, Lord, we admit that we have broken life because we haven't followed the instructions, you also tell us that you have a plan to fix it.

And I pray, Lord, for anybody who has not yet read or responded or understood that news, I pray today that you would cause them to look further into Christ, to embrace Him, to follow Him, to listen to how His coming into the world can fix them, restore their relationship with the one they were meant to have all joy in so that one day we can all be in the restored creation and enjoy the eternal pleasures at your right hand.

[22 : 59] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.