

Title: "Joy to All People"

Text: Luke 2:1-20

Introduction:

What is this time of year really about? As you look around this Christmas season, what do the sights and sounds of the holidays show we are celebrating?

From "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "White Christmas" to an email inbox full of unbeatable deals guaranteed to arrive by the 25th, we create a cultural holiday euphoria. And yet, if you peel back the layers, what is it all about?

If you ask the angels in Luke Chapter 2 what it's all about, they will tell you - it is about good tidings of great joy - joy found in our Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Let's read together the Christmas story as found in Luke 2:1-20.

Read 2:1-20 (Key verses 10-11)

Prayer

Transition: As we consider what the joyous meaning of Christmas...There is joy to all people...

I. ...because Jesus is the Promised Savior.

The chapter opens by explaining that Joseph and Mary come to Bethlehem. Caesar Augustus had ordered everyone in the Roman Empire to be registered (taxed) in their hometown. And **while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.**

Of course, God knew Mary would be in Bethlehem when she would be ready to deliver Jesus, so when He promised this Savior in the Old Testament, He was very specific. At the time of Jesus's birth, there were two places named Bethlehem. Fascinatingly, prophecy pinpointed the one where Messiah would be born in Micah 5:2, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, [Though] you are little among the thousands of Judah, [Yet] out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth [are] from of old, From everlasting." The other Bethlehem was further north near Nazareth. And it happened just as God's Word had promised it would.

The passage refers twice to "the city of David." Jesus is the heir to David's throne. The Old Testament Scriptures promised: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:7, KJV) He is the Messiah King, the Promised Savior. And this gives us great joy.

Earlier in Luke's Gospel (1:30-33), the birth of Jesus was promised to the virgin Mary. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Bible scholars have identified over 300 OT prophecies concerning the promised Savior, which Jesus perfectly fulfilled.

Application:

So, what is Christmas all about? Why do you and I have joy at Christmas time? The Christ child, Jesus, is our Promised Savior.

When God makes a promise, He keeps it. He always has, and He always will. You can trust the Word of God. Luke is writing this Gospel to Theophilus, and he states that his purpose is that Theophilus "may be convinced of the certainty of the things you have heard and read about Jesus of Nazareth." What God says will happen, happens. Things don't always happen in your time and my time. Sometimes they happen sooner; sometimes they happen long after we feel they should. Many OT saints died awaiting in faith the coming of Messiah.

Jesus's arrival on the scene is wonderful news, because it is the fulfillment of God's promise to send us a Savior. He promised to send us a Savior, and that's exactly what He did. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Transition: So, thinking of what Christmas is about -- not only is there joy to all people because Jesus our Promised Savior: there is joy to all people...

II. ...because Jesus is Our Personal Savior

...unto YOU is born this day, a Savior!

The concept of being born “unto” you is gift language. He was born so that He could fulfill His role as your Savior. He was born *for you*.

The angel Gabriel had already told Mary, "You will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21) Apart from the saving of sinful mankind from their sins, Jesus had no reason to come to this earth.

When that moment came for Jesus to lay down His life, as He pondered the anguish and suffering which He was about to face, He languished in His spirit, but He also said, "What should I do? flee from this? No - because it is for this cause that I have come to this hour." (John 12:27) Dying on the cross and shedding His blood for your sin and mine was primary whole reason He came to this earth.

Paul says it this way in Philippians 2:7-8, “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Perhaps the most dangerous lie that Satan ever tells is to assert that Jesus is an *impersonal* Savior...to speak of Jesus as Savior in abstract terms that have no life-changing bearing on us personally. Someone might say, “He may be *their* Savior; He may even be *your* Savior. But, I have not personally accepted Him as *my* Savior.” It is possible for us to do lip service to the idea of Jesus being a Savior, to sing of His saving power, to go through the motions of attending worship, and all the rest without ever accepting Him as our personal Savior.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Application:

There are people who call Jesus Lord who will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Why not? Because they know the language, but have never accepted Him personally. If you are a nominal Christian - a Christian in name only, then this passage is frightening to you. You mean that there are people who have done many wonderful works in the name of Jesus to whom Jesus will say, "I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." How can this be? You and I might look at such a person and be convinced that he or she is saved. But Jesus knows that person's heart. What is the difference? They have never made Him their personal Savior - received Him personally.

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, He did not say, "*They* must be born again." He said, "*You* must be born again." Unto *them* is born this day -- no. The angels said, "Unto *you* is born this day, a Savior which is Christ the Lord."

Argumentation:

The difference between acknowledging Jesus as the Savior of the world and acknowledging Him as your personal Savior could be the difference between heaven and hell.

Martin Luther said, "The life of Christianity consists of possessive pronouns." There is a great deal of difference between saying, "Christ is a Savior" and saying "Christ is *my* Savior."

[You may choose to offer some testimonies of people in your ministry of whom this was true. In the original message, I had some of my own stories, but have deleted them because of the public format of this message. Stories that work well are testimonies of someone who felt they were saved, but never made Jesus their own personal Savior. Your own testimony would be excellent to share.]

My own story:

Application:

You can have joy this Christmas season, because Jesus is God's gift to YOU! He was sent to be your personal Savior. You say, how do I accept Jesus as my personal Savior.

You agree with God about your sin. You confess that you have sinned. You understand that Jesus died in your place; He paid the price for your sins. You accept what He did on the cross as payment for your sin, and believe that God raised Him from the dead. In doing this, you identify with Him in His death on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection. You receive the free gift of eternal life. You are a new creature. Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9, KJV)

You will not get into heaven on the basis of a warm, fuzzy feeling. You will not get into heaven on the basis of your parents' commitment to Christ. You will not get into heaven with a hope-so, maybe-so salvation. You cannot go to heaven just because you were sprinkled as a child. You will be received into heaven if and only if you have trusted Christ as your personal Savior.

Receive the gift! Open the gift! Accept Him, and make Him your very own!

Transition: There is joy to all people because Jesus is Our Promised Savior, and He is Our Personal Savior, and the text shows we can have joy because Jesus is Our Powerful Savior.

III. ...because He is Our Powerful Savior

"Which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10)

Speaking of the power of Jesus Christ to save, the Apostle Paul put it this way in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believeth - to the Jew first and also to the Gentile."

The message is for everyone. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11)

I love Hebrews 7:25, "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

One of the reasons that people do not accept Jesus as their personal Savior is that they have doubts deep within as to His ability to save them. Maybe there is something that they have done that they feel is too awful for Jesus to forgive. They don't understand the depth of God's love, the power of the cross, the intensity of God's grace. Hebrews

7:25 tells us He IS able to save those who come to God through Him. If you come to Christ in faith for salvation, you will not be turned away.

All you have to do is Come. He is able to save anyone who comes in faith.

Transition to Conclusion:

Has there ever been a time in your life where you made a personal decision to trust Christ? Are you treating your Christianity as a series of good deeds that provide only a veneer of religiousness? Are you hoping with white knuckles and crossed fingers that you can do enough good to convince God of your sincerity? Or are you ready to quit trying and start trusting in the grace of Jesus Christ. Today you can receive the greatest Christmas gift ever given - the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Believers, this time of year, as we prepare to celebrate Christmas with friends and family, thank God for the gift of Christ Jesus. Thank God for delivering upon His promise to send a Savior. Thank God that He gave you the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel - to receive Christ as your personal Savior. And thank God that Jesus's power to save was sufficient for you. And then find someone you can tell about our Savior this Christmas.

I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people: Unto YOU is born this day - a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

What will you do with him?

Let us pray together.

Time of Response.

Suggested Song: "O Come, Let Us Adore Him."