

Jesus the Eternal Joy

### **Luke 2:8-20 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup>In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of **great joy** which will be **for all the people**;<sup>11</sup> for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” <sup>15</sup>When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they came in a hurry and **found their way** to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. <sup>18</sup>And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

### **Introduction**

Christmas is only a week away from today. Every place we turn to is filled with the Christmas spirit—giving and sharing. Bells of the Salvation Army are ringing for the needy. People are filling the kettle with generosity and kindness. Houses are decorated with beautiful Christmas trees and lights. Stores are packed with shoppers. And the Church will soon be filled with worshipers. Yes, indeed, it is a wonderful time of the year. It is the season of joy and celebration—the joy and celebration of Jesus’ birth.

2,000 years ago in Bethlehem, at the first Christmas, a different celebration was going on. That night, an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before the shepherds and announced, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of **great joy** which will be **for all people** (v. 10).”

Yes, **joy** is one of the key words for Advent season, isn’t it? Around this time, everybody is looking for joy. We the believers too. We need and we want joy.

Let me tell you that we already have joy, because Christ dwells in us who is our joy, great joy, and eternal joy! That’s why, in every Christmas season, we sing “Joy to the World the Lord is come” (present perfect tense—action took place and is in effect) meaning “Christ the joy

to the world *has come and is with us.*” The real question is: *Is He really your joy? Can you honestly say that you have Christ the joy in your heart? Or, do you only confess with your lips yet no joy in your life?*

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That question led me to study the word “joy” in the Bible and I am about to share with you what I have discovered.

**First, Christ Himself is the joy we long for.** He is our joy. In Jesus, dwells joy and we find joy in Him. He is a joy-giver, not a killjoy. To everyone who comes to Him, He gives joy. He never takes away joy from us, either. In fact, He is the only one who can fill us with a true joy that satisfies our soul, with the joy that transcends circumstances, and with the joy that lasts eternally. Everyone who personally meets Jesus will overflow with joy.

Think of Mary, the mother of Jesus, for instance (Luke 1:47). She was a virgin who was engaged to Joseph. One day, Gabriel the messenger of God appeared to her saying that she would conceive a child not by man but by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31, 35). It must have been a real shocker to her: *pregnant before the wedding?* Unthinkable! Unacceptable! Literally, it meant a serious breach of engagement, a great shame both to herself and to her family, and even a potential death penalty, being stoned by the village folk. Yet surprisingly Mary took the shocking news from God with gusto, with praise and great joy—the joy that transcended her challenges even death. She declared, “My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).

What about the shepherds in the fields? After the angel of the Lord told them that Savior was born in Bethlehem (v. 10-12), they left their flock behind and went to Bethlehem right away to check it out. After knocking at many doors to locate the newborn king (v. 16---*'found their way'*---*'ah-new-ron'*---*ανευρον*---Greek meaning: ‘to find out *after a thorough search*’), they finally found the baby and the family as they had been told. Returning to their flock, they were **filled with joy** and glorified and praised God for what they had witnessed. They wouldn’t exchange their joy with anything else in the world.

One more group to whom Christ gave His joy was the wise men from the East. By the time they arrived in Jerusalem from the East, they must have been exhausted from traveling hundreds of miles. Yet, they too **rejoiced exceedingly** when they saw the baby Jesus and worshiped Him (Matthew 2:10-11).

Question: what is the one thing in common among these three groups (Mary, the shepherds, and the wise men)? Meeting Christ the baby in person and the joy thereof.

Imagine you are standing before Christ the newborn king this morning; you too would worship and rejoice along with these witnesses, wouldn't you? What would make your heart rejoice? The feeling of awe and sense of wonder; chosen by God to witness the greatest historic moment of all; the coming of Messiah in human form—Indeed, Jesus is “joy of our desiring” as Martin Janus wrote. He is the great joy for all people.

**Next, Christ's joy is for us.** The joy of Christ didn't stop on the first Christmas. It stayed with the followers of Christ. For instance, Jesus' disciples were filled with joy when they saw the risen Lord. The same joy also filled the believers in the Early Church and for the next 2,000 years, and it still does today.

This morning, Jesus our Lord promises that we will have **His joy** made full in ourselves (John 17:13). He only promises what He means to keep. He means to give His joy to every child of God—His gift to us all. God the Father also wants us to have Christ's joy. Indeed, joy is an integral part of our Christian life: not just in part, but in full; not just in good times only, but in bad times as well; not just around Christmas time, but all year round and beyond. Not just yesterday or today, but tomorrow and eternally. It is God's will for us to have joy in our life.

Yet, the reality is different: Why is it that not many believers seem to have joy in their lives? Perhaps, because we don't believe that Christ has paid the wages of our sin once and for all. Perhaps, we don't confess that Jesus was physically resurrected from the dead. Perhaps, we lack faith in the Almighty God with whom nothing is impossible. Perhaps, we don't trust in God who is greater than any problem we face every day. Perhaps, we lack the sense of awe and wonder in our faith in Christ. Perhaps, in our walk with God, we lack the wonder of God's miracles or answered prayers. Perhaps, some of us never personally met Christ the Living. Here's one person who never met Christ personally until one night. Meet Blaise Pascal, the 17<sup>th</sup> century French mathematician, philosopher, and theologian.

*Although Pascal had a genius mind, he struggled with questions of the soul. Beginning with the unbearable loss of his mother to a mysterious illness when he was three, he later developed his own illness that sapped his life. Ultimately, Pascal's intellect couldn't provide all the answers.*

*On November 23, 1654, Blaise Pascal was reading the 17th Chapter of John when he had a life-changing encounter with God. He wrote the following (on a piece of paper and had sewn it inside his shirt and kept it as an amulet):*

*From about half past ten at night to about half an hour after midnight,*

*FIRE*

*“God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,” not of philosophers and scholars*

Certitude, **heartfelt joy**, peace.

God of Jesus Christ.

God of Jesus Christ.

The world forgotten, everything except God.

“O righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You” (John 17:25).

**Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.**

*It was at this moment that Pascal knew it wasn't enough to know about God or debate his existence with the finest thinkers in the world. Rather, it was essential to meet God personally (Pascal's life-changing encounter with God (<https://drivethruhistory.com>)).*

We too can have such joy when we encounter Christ in God's Word.

**Finally, Christ only, not the world, can give us the joy everlasting.** Christ's joy is absolutely and totally different from the worldly joy. The worldly joy is based on our feelings and circumstances: it comes and goes depending on our moods. It is conditional and circumstantial. The Christian joy is different: it originates from God. It transcends circumstances. It doesn't depend on our feelings, either. How is it possible? Because it is not affected by time or circumstances as Christ is not.

So, even amid our unhappiness, we can still have Christ's joy deep down in our hearts. It is the same joy that Apostle Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 6:8: “**as sorrowful yet always rejoicing.**” “**I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction**” (2 Corinthians 7:4). Paul found the secret of Christ's joy. Christ's joy comes when we encounter and walk with the Living Jesus in our lives. It comes from the assurance of Jesus as our Savior and Lord. It comes to those who walk in all the way which God commands them each day (Jeremiah 7:23). It is also the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

## Conclusion

Let me sum up: how do we have Christ's joy? It is very simple. Invite Him into your heart as Savior and Lord. Also, live according to God's will **at any cost**. Then, you will be filled with the joy unspeakable. Think of Mary. What made her overflow with an extreme joy? It was her attitude! She said to the angel, “Behold, the bond-slave of the Lord; **be it done to me according to your word**” (Luke 1:38). That's the secret of Christian joy.

Amen.