

Joy

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[0 : 00] And the angel of the Lord suddenly said before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy.

In Greek, the word actually means massive or mega. It will be for all the people. For today in the city of David, there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

You know, every time I read this passage, I get totally overwhelmed. Every time I think about what Christmas really is about, I get emotional and I get choked up to think about what it really means and why we're here.

You know, I think it's incredible that right now, throughout all the world, in thousands and hundreds of countries, through thousands of languages, men and women and kiddos come together and they celebrate the birth of a baby boy who is born to bring joy to everyone.

I mean, when we read this, we're actually reading the very first sermon, the very first Christmas sermon that was given by the angels 2,000 years ago. It's about this birth of this little Jewish boy who would grow up to be Savior of the world and bring joy to all men.

[1 : 25] C.S. Lewis and J.R. Tolkien in their writings, they talked about joy over and over and over. They were infatuated with joy. Tolkien, you know, he's written the author, he's the author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

And as he tried to define joy, he said it's this feeling that we cannot comprehend truly. He said joy is a deep, deep-seated longing that's embedded in each of us.

And his joy sends us on a journey. And we go on this journey to find this object which will perfectly fulfill our longing. The longing, he said, can be expressed in many ways.

For many of us, we try to attain joy by fulfilling this longing, by acquiring objects. Some of these objects become precious to us. Some of us try to get joy through relationships and through security and through control and through approval and through wealth and through power and through love. But the question is, once we attain these things, often in large amounts, do they really fulfill that deep, deep longing inside of us?

[2 : 35] Or do we feel empty and try to figure out other ways to feel that longing? Do we go on other journeys? I mean, in *The Hobbit*, Tolkien writes about this idea of true joy.

And he said true joy is found in home. And this idea of being home and being in a place where you need to be and where you belong, where everybody knows you, it's the story, it's the theme of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

And at least 18 times in *The Hobbit*, we see that Bilbo longs for home. He longs for the shire. I mean, the dwarves, you know what they long for?

They long for gold and they long for this mountain they go into in their kingdom. The elves, you know what they long for? They long for this land far away across the ocean, this gray haven, this place where, actually gray haven translates means heaven.

And they're longing for these things and they said, if we can just get there, if we can just get this, we'll have joy. I don't want to give away next year's episode of *The Hobbit*.

[3 : 41] But spoiler alert, once Bilbo and the dwarves get home, it's not the same. It's not the joy that they had hoped for, it's not the thing that they had longed for, it doesn't fill them completely because home has changed.

They have changed. And Tolkien writes his way because he wanted us to discover in his writings that our true home isn't here.

But our true home is heaven. And the longing that we feel, this angst that we feel as we walk through our days all the time trying to find joy, he says it's never going to be totally, truly satisfied.

In fact, the only way that it's going to be totally and truly satisfied is in a relationship with the one who created us, in a relationship with God. I mean, Tolkien ultimately wanted us to see that the only way to find true joy, the only way to find a lasting, deep, soul-satisfying joy, the only way to find Christmas joy is to go to the place that we were made for, to return to the place that we were made for.

You're not made for earth. You were made for someplace else, Tolkien wanted us to understand. And the only way we could find this true joy is if we found the one who made us God, our creator.

[5 : 10] And so we celebrate Christmas this time where God sends a Savior. He sends a Savior to show us himself.

And he sends a Savior to show us the way home. In Christmas, in Jesus, God has given each one of us a firm path, a firm foundation on which we can stand, a foundation that we never have to doubt in.

It's a foundation where we know that we will find true and lasting joy. I mean, Christmas is about God sending us a Savior. And this Savior, listen to this, this Savior promises to save us from something.

He promises to save us from our sin. He promises to save us from the effects of sin in our life. And so we stand on this foundation of Jesus. And now on Christmas, when we talk about God, when we talk to God, we can talk to him as our heavenly father.

Father, we can talk to God as our heavenly father in spite of everything that we've done wrong, in spite of all the attempts we've tried to do in finding joy in other places, in spite of our weaknesses, in spite of our sin.

[6 : 19] Christmas is about finding joy in the one who created us. This is the season that we're reminded that joy comes from God. Now you're gonna leave here in every other faith, every other religion, every other philosophy, every other thing around you is gonna tell you that you're gonna find joy and this is how you find it.

This is how you find God. But in Christmas, God says, I'm God, I love you. And I've come down to find you.

And I've come down to give you lasting joy in a relationship with me. I mean, this is the season that we're reminded that God has drawn close to us.

God has drawn close to us, those of us who've drawn away. Those of us who've been drawn away by other precious things, by our selfishness, by our control, by our pride, by our self-righteousness, by our self-reliance.

This is the season that we're reminded that God has drawn close to us. This is the season that we're reminded that we cannot negotiate our sin anymore with God. I don't know if you're like me, but sometimes I try to negotiate my sin and get some things off because maybe it wasn't really that bad.

[7 : 36] But this is the season where we cannot negotiate our sin anymore because God has ended all the negotiation. All the negotiation ended at a manger that will become a cross one day and your sin and my sin have been forgiven in Jesus Christ.

For behold, I bring you good news of great joy for unto us is born a son, for unto us, for unto Tobin, for unto you is born a Savior.

I mean, this Savior brings us joy and it's the kind of joy that you and I can walk through our world and even though our workplace and even though our family and even though our life and even though the world is out of control, this joy tells us that everything can be good between you and God.

That we can be a people who we can trust that God is in control of our life no matter what happens. Not because of what we've done. Not because of what we haven't done.

But because of what God has done for us. My hope for each of us this Christmas Day is that we would consider the words of the angels. That we would surrender our attempts to find joy in our own lives and our own things.

[9 : 06] That we'd invite Jesus Christ into our life. That we would allow Him to give us true joy. That we'd allow Him to give us true rest.

That we'd understand that the meaning of joy that our home, that our Creator is not here. And God is sending His Son Jesus today to remind us of that.

And our prayer is as a church that we would remember that and that we would cling to that as we walk through these days. Let's pray. Father, we thank You for this day. We come to You this season in this moment of reflection and we just thank You for this celebration. we realize that all of us today come to You with the same need. We all have the exact same need. We need a Savior. We all desperately need forgiveness. We all are desperately seeking for joy and meaning and purpose in life. [10:13] We all need mercy, grace, compassion. And so this season right now, right here, we come before You and we just worship You.

And we know that all these things are found in a little baby Jewish boy born in a manger who shows us the path to the true home, who shows us what true joy is, who reminds us that You are with us all the time, who will never let us go.

And it's Wednesday that manger is transformed into a cross. And in that cross, the fulfillment of Christmas is complete. Father, I pray for some of us in here who haven't even started the journey yet.

I pray that just this Christmas season, they would think about that message, they would think about joy, and they would ask themselves an honest question, do I feel that? Am I experiencing that in my life? What does it really mean to have joy?

And what I've been looking for to have joy, whatever that is, my title, my profession, my job, my family, my relationships, whatever it is, is that truly satisfying me? And I pray that they would think of this little baby in the manger who came to bring us back to You.

[11:28] And they would ask questions of their friends of why they find joy in Jesus. Father, I pray for the rest of us who have gone on the journey, and we have been traveling for a long time, for many of us, and we wonder when You're going to come back.

We wonder why things are so terrible, and we wonder what we have to do or what we haven't done. And I pray for those of us here like that, that we would realize that You've done everything, that we can come to You this Christmas, again, not because of what we've done and not because of what we haven't done, but we can come to You this Christmas because of what Your Son has done. And so we come to You as Your people, and we trust You. We worship You, and we ask You to make our joy complete and bring us home.

Father, we love You, and we pray these things in Your Son, Jesus Christ, holy name. Amen.