

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

The Gift of Joy

Luke 2:10-11; John 15

INTRODUCTION: Luke 2:10–11 NKJV 10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of **great joy** which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Certainly when the shepherds came to Bethlehem and found Baby Jesus, lying in the manger, their hearts were filled with joy.

Luke tells us that when they left the stable, they went everywhere glorifying and praising God that the Messiah had come, and sharing this good news with everyone they encountered. I suspect they had NEVER experienced joy such as they did on that holy night and the day following.

And that is not the end of the theme of joy surrounding the person of Jesus. The Lord brought joy to people everywhere He went.

- As Jesus grew physically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially (increased in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man), Jesus brought great joy to His parents.
- When our Lord performed His first miracle and multiplied the fresh grape juice, for that is what the text means when it says the best wine, the bride and groom and their whole families were overjoyed that Jesus had saved their wedding celebration.
- When Jesus told the paralyzed man to take up his bed and walk, you can bet he did it with greater joy than he had ever had in his life.
- When Jesus healed the blind man outside Jericho, joy shown in his heart more brilliantly than the new light in his eyes.
- When Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the tree and went to his house for lunch, resulting in this self-centered tax collector trusting in Christ, Zach found out there was greater joy in returning fourfold what he had wrongfully taken from people across the years than in all of what he thought was happiness in his schemes to rob them.
- And when Jesus called Lazarus to come out of the tomb, the tear stained faces of Mary and Martha beamed again with joy because their brother was alive.

And the joy the Lord Jesus brings to lives after His resurrection and ascension are far, far, greater than during the short 33 years of life upon the earth.

You know, don't you?

- The joy that comes with salvation.
- The joy of knowing that all our sins have been forgiven, washed and made clean like the newly fallen snow.
- The joy of knowing we shall live with Him in heaven and then one day rule with Him in the Millennial Kingdom.
- The joy of growing to be more like Him and the joy of walking in the light as He is in the light.
- The joy in difficult times of knowing He will never leave us or forsake us.

And we could go on and on about the joys Christ has brought to our lives because He came to this earth and because He gave His life for ours and died for our sins.

Many, many, many are the individual joys Christ brings into the lives of those who trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

And if you do not know those joys, you can.

As surely as God sent an angel to shepherds to bring good news of great joy, God has sent the gospel to you, through Jesus, through Word, through me and others. Christ died, rose, and you live.

If you will trust Him as your Lord and Master, a multitude of joys awaits you as a born again child of God. That does not mean there will be no troubles or sorrows. But many of the sorrows Jesus will change into joys as He did the water into grape juice.

But did you know, that Jesus does not just want your life to be punctuated with occasional joy, He wants your life to be FULL of joy.

John 15:11 NKJV "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Hmmmm,

What did Jesus tell them?

Whatever it was, it was directions to the path of a joy filled life.

Would you like to know that? Would you like to know how to walk through your life and it be full of joy?

Then, let's read the words before John 15:11 and see what Jesus spoke to His disciples about how their joy could be full.

John 15:1–11 NKJV

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 **Abide in Me**, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it **abides** in the vine, neither can you, unless you **abide** in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who **abides** in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not **abide** in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you **abide** in Me, and My words **abide** in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; **abide** in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will **abide** in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and **abide** in His love.

11 "**These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.**

What does the word abide mean? I taught you this just a little more than a year ago, but the pandemic was on, and maybe you missed it or need to be refreshed.

- **To stay**
- **To reside**
- **To remain**
- **To continue**
- **To keep on keeping on**

What does it mean to "abide in Christ?" Again, Jesus tells us.

John 15:3 **You are already clean** because of the word which I have spoken to you.

- **living the cleansed life**

We talked about this when we considered Daniel last week.

Cleansed doesn't mean never sinned.

Cleansed means

- repenting of sin
- forsaking that sin
- confessing the sin to God
- consequently, being forgiven and cleansed of sin

Folks, sin in the life of the Christian does not take away salvation.

It does not undo Christ's death for us on the cross.

God does not cancel our adoption into the family of God.

Sin in our lives as believers DOES hurt our fellowship with God.

Sin hurts our friendship with Jesus, just as an offence against some other good friend will hurt your friendship with him or her.

If we have not repented, forsaken, and confessed our current sins to Jesus, we are still His sheep, but we are wayward sheep, and we are not abiding in Him.

John 15:7 NKJV If you abide in Me, and **My words abide in you**, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- **living in His Word**

- This means believing His Word, not denying portions of it or explaining it away.
- It also means learning more and more of His Word.
- Reading, Studying, Memorizing His Word so that we have it readily in our minds.

John 15:7 NKJV If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, **you will ask** what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- **praying, "asking"**

- Jesus wants us to call upon Him.
- He said ask, seek, knock.

- He used as a positive example the friend that kept on asking so much he seemed to be a pest.
- The Lord wants us praying so much we seem to pester Him. It is part of abiding in Him.

John 15:9 “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; **abide** in My love.

- **Receiving and giving the love of Jesus** (next week in United @ St. Andrew at 10:30, we will examine the gift of love as we complete our look at the Gifts of Christmas. We will also take the Lord’s Supper together as one church family, united in Christ Jesus.

John 15:10 If you **keep My commandments**, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

- **obeying His commandments**

Abiding in Christ

- **makes us fruitful**
- **makes us joyful**

Staying, residing, remaining, continuing, keeping on keeping on

- **in being cleansed**
- **staying in the Word**
- **continually praying**
- **loving**
- **obeying the Lord**

Makes our lives full of joy that comes from God.

It is a gift of Christmas, a gift we have because Christ came.

I am confident that we will all be filled with joy as we go into D building today at the end of the Second Worship Service and see the rebuilt church offices.

I know I will. Next week we move into our new ones. You can rejoice with us!

Folks, the Lord wants our joy to be full, our souls in peace, and our lives filled with hope.

They can be, and they will be as we abide in Christ.

And in January, as we join God in the work He is continuing to do to restore our facilities as a church family, abiding in Christ pretty well summarizes the way He wants to find us.

If we are, we will be ready to be and do what He wants us to be and do.