

**Welcome:** “Good morning... my name is Chad and I’m one of the pastor/elders here at Reality Ventura.

As you know we are in a short series for **Advent**... Dom spoke on **Hope** - “*Hope in the Waiting*” two Sunday’s ago... and Billy spoke on **Peace** - “*Jesus Is Our Peace*” last Sunday... and today I will be speaking on **Joy**.

The title of this morning’s sermon is: **Good News of Great Joy**

Before we get into our text this morning... As way of reminder, let’s be mindful that **Advent** is for admiring and treasuring Jesus.

The Christmas season is one of the busiest times of the year. But it is also a season of reflection and preparation for that special day when we mark Immanuel’s coming—*the arrival of our eternal God in our own frail humanity*.

**Advent** is an annual season of patient waiting, hopeful expectation, soul-searching, and calendar-watching marked by many churches, Christian families, and individual followers of Jesus.

**Advent** is a time in which we need to be “**awakened**” or “**stirred up**” by the Spirit of God to feel some measure of **Joy** God intends for Christmas to bring.

The English word “**Advent**” is from the Latin **adventus**, which means “**coming**.” In light of us preparing our hearts in celebration of Jesus first “**coming**”... *would you join me in prayer.*

**Open in prayer...**

To be totally open and real... For those who know me well (especially my family)... they know I struggle to find and experience **Joy** during the Christmas season. I not only struggle with finding **Joy**... but also, my lack of **Joy** due to my unhappy and depressing attitude; pretty much quenches everyone else’s **Joy** around me... *more so as it relates to my family.*

**Why is this?** Honestly, I'm already kind of bent this way in my personality... I'm kind of melancholy at times. But, when the Christmas Season rolls around with all the craziness and commercialism that seems to play such a big part during Christmas in America... it seriously overwhelms me and it has a way of sinking me into a depression.

It all begins when I go to Costco in August looking for camping gear and instead I'm shocked to find out they have already turned that camping section into the Christmas section – and I'm faced with the overwhelming thought; **“Oh no... Christmas is just around the corner and its only August.”**

It grieves me that our American culture has turned what should be the greatest celebration... **“The birth of Jesus Christ – the Savior of the world”** into a materialistic, indulgence of commercialism.

Every year just after Thanksgiving I'm always saying to myself; **“What's wrong with me, why am I so bummed out... I should be happy. Am I the only one that feels this way?”**

And it's only getting worse now that **“Black Friday”** starts a week before Thanksgiving on a Monday.

But in the midst of all this craziness and me personally wrestling with being overwhelmed and depressed... something *significant* happened a few years back... *actually, not that significant* - I watched... **‘A Charlie Brown Christmas’**

Some of you may be wondering; *“What does Charlie Brown have to do with Christmas?”*

First, for those who may have never seen **‘A Charlie Brown Christmas’**... it's a classic commentary about Christmas in American culture... and yet captures *the true essence and glory of God in the birth of our Savior.*

Secondly, I realized I wasn't all alone feeling bummed out and discouraged during the Christmas Season... *I found a friend in Charlie Brown.*

Many of you who have seen **‘A Charlie Brown Christmas’** may remember that in the opening scene **Charlie Brown** and **Linus** are walking together outside in the snow and **Charlie Brown** says to **Linus**:

***"I think there must be something wrong with me Linus... Christmas is coming, but I'm not happy... I don't feel they way I'm supposed to feel... I just don't understand Christmas I guess... I like getting presents and sending Christmas cards and decorating tree's and all that; but I'm still not happy... I always end up feeling depressed."***

Linus responds;

***"Charlie Brown, you're the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem... maybe Lucy is right... of all the Charlie Browns in the world, you're the Charlie Browniest!"***

If your familiar with '**A Charlie Brown Christmas**', your aware that all the vinets throughout the episode address different parody's, traditions, and emotions that many of us can all identify with during the Christmas Season.

And yet, '**A Charlie Brown Christmas**' climaxes at the end with the most *glorious, wonderful, beautiful, and transcending truth* in all History... when **Charlie Brown** yells out loud;

***"Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"***

Linus humbly responds;

***"Sure Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about."***

Linus steps onto the stage alone... the lights go dim... and the spotlight shines on Linus for this climactic and glorious moment as he quotes from **Luke Ch. 2**

**<sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was 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 those with whom he is pleased!"**

**Linus** then turns to **Charlie Brown** and say's;

***“And that’s what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown.”***

**Charlie Brown** picks up his *sad little Christmas tree* with a smile on his face and walks outside looking into the stars as the words of **Luke 2** run through his head and say's to himself out loud;

***“Linus is right, I won’t let all this commercialism ruin my Christmas.”***

My hope and prayer this **Advent Season** leading into Christmas Day... is that we, like **Charlie Brown** wouldn't let all the commercialism, busyness, unrealistic expectations, relational tension, family drama and such... bum us out (or for some, who find ourselves depressed for no apparent reason) ruin the beautiful simplicity of celebrating **the birth of Christ – our savior!**

In which the Bible declares concerning **Jesus...** the Christ:

**“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.”** Hebrews 1:3

**“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”** Colossians 1:15

**“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”** Colossians 2:9

**“Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”** Philippians 2:6-7

**“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”** John 1:14

These glorious, powerful, eternal truths concerning **Jesus**, is why Luke (inspired by the Spirit) penned the angelic declaration concerning the **birth of Christ**:

**“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11 (ESV)**

As Christians we have so much to rejoice about this **Christmas Season**. We are reminded in **Zechariah 9:9** of the prophecy concerning our coming King which says;

**“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!**

See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

This is why we rejoice and celebrate Christmas as it say's in **Isaiah 9:6**,

“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called **Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**” Isaiah 9:6

We are also reminded of what Jesus said to His disciples in **Luke 10:20**;

“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, **but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**”

With all the distractions and unrealistic expectations... and maybe for some of us like myself... the depression and funk that the Christmas season can bring... We need to be **“awakened”** or **“stirred up”** to feel some measure of **Joy** God intends for Christmas to bring... Awakened to the reality of Jesus... **“Behold, I bring you good news of great joy”**

Not small **joy**... Not modest **joy**... But **“great joy.”** If we don't feel this when we ponder *the incarnation of the Son of God*, we need “awakening.” We need to be “stirred up.”

The joy Jesus brought into the world was like no other kind in history. Once we have it, it cannot be destroyed. Jesus said in **John 16:22**, **“No one will take your joy from you.”**

The joy that Jesus came to bring is from **outside this world**. It is the very joy that Jesus himself has in God the Father— which he has had from all eternity and will have forever.

There is no greater joy than the joy that is found in God... because God is the greatest object of joy... and God has the greatest powers to enjoy.

For Me... pursuing Jesus in this season brings joy... by purposely and proactively getting my thoughts on Jesus by reading daily Advent devotionals. Allowing the Spirit of God to stir my affections and awaken me daily... that Jesus is the greatest object of my joy!!!

Jesus said **John 15:11**, "I have spoken to you, that **my joy** may be in you, and that your joy may be full." His joy was the very joy of God. He promises to put that in us.

That is what the Holy Spirit does. He pours out the love of God in our hearts as were told in **Romans 5:5**... and were also told in **Galatians 5:22** that "The fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy** (and so on...)" This is "**great joy**." And it cannot be taken away... It is indestructible.

Ah, but our joy can go to sleep... It can be ripped-off by discouragement...It can be buried by depression. That's why Peter says; "I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder" (2 Pet. 1:13).

Yes... It is very right. Because, oh, how wrong, how sad... when we stand before great wonders and feel nothing. It is right, therefore, that Peter writes to awaken and stir up our affections for the greatest wonder of all: **the arrival and the work and the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in this world.**

The Gospel of Luke gives the most detailed story of the arrival and birth of Christ... and also the most detailed prescription for joy. Luke wants us to see that the story of the world meeting Jesus in the flesh is a story of the world finally finding full joy in God.

It begins with the birth of John the Baptist. The angel said to Zechariah:

"Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have **joy** and gladness, and many will **rejoice** at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. . . and he will go before him to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him." Luke 1:13-17 (ESV)

Even before the baby was born, the message was a message of **joy**. Through his angel, the Lord promised that people would **rejoice** at the birth of John because he would pave the way for the Christ.

The **joy** God's people would have in Jesus was so real and so intense that they would feel it looking into the face of the messenger — a man set apart to declare the coming of the King.

**Rejoice! The King is coming into the world to save sinners and spread his joy.**

Then, the baby was born... the Messiah himself came forth from heaven through his mother's womb. That night, an angel appeared to some shepherds and declared, "**Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people**" (Luke 2:10).

Those poor, unsuspecting shepherds were hearing the chorus of the praise that we've sung ever since.

***"Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare him room."***

**Rejoice!** The King *has* come, and with this baby, fullness of joy... **great joy** was born for all those who would believe.

During this **Advent** season we need to know Christmas is not normal joy. Christmas, the Gospels say, is **great joy**.

Christmas is not natural joy... but supernatural. God set Christmas apart. He himself has come down in the person of his Son. The Word has become flesh. The long-awaited Savior is born.

When the angel heralds his arrival, he says, "**I bring you good news of great joy**"... And when pagan astrologers traverse far and find him, "**they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.**" (Matt. 2:10)

God gave us a world of joys to get us ready for this moment when announcing "**joy**" no longer would be enough. God gave us **joy** for Christmas joy to surpass it.

But not only did God fill His world with joy... but also his word. The Bible is replete with "**joy**" — more than two hundred times in an English translation — but "**great joy**" appears in single digits. "**Great joy**" is rare and climactic.

- At the anointing of David's own son as his successor, at the height of Israel's kingdom — **“great joy”** (1 Kings 1:40).
- At the restoration of the Passover after generations of neglect — **“great joy”** (2 Chronicles 30:26).
- At the dedication of Nehemiah's rebuilt walls after the return from exile — **“great joy”** (Nehemiah 12:43).

**Joy** is the stuff of every day... **“great joy”** is kept for the highest moments.

Other than **Matthew's** and **Luke's** mention of **“great joy”** at Jesus's birth...

- Both Gospels celebrate **“great joy”** at his resurrection and ascension (Matthew 28:8; Luke 24:52).
- **Acts 15:3** mentions **“great joy”** at the surprising and wonderful inclusion of the Gentiles in God's new-covenant people.
- And how else could **Jude 24** describe our coming into God's own presence without the experience of **“great joy”**?

**“Great joy”** at Christmas tells us something profound about God and how he works in our world.

- God gave us a garden in the beginning... *to prepare us for a garden-city in the end.*
- God made the world... *to remake it one day.*
- God gave a first covenant... *to surpass it with a second.*
- God gave John the Baptist... *to point forward to Jesus.*
- God made a world of joys... *to surpass them all with the treasure hidden in a field, the pearl of great price, and the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- God gave us joy... *to accentuate and deepen the experience of **“great joy.”***

There must be **joy** before there can be **“great joy.”** We must know good before we can know better. God designed his world of joys to prepare us for **“great joy”** in his son Jesus.

*So... How then, is the joy of Christmas not just normal but great?*

Do Matthew and Luke give us any hints as to how Christmas joy is set apart from the joys we know and love every day... even in our struggle and pain and maybe depression?

Let's look and close with **3 answers** to those questions:

### First, **Great Heights**

Hark! The angel who heralds "**great joy**" in **Luke 2:10** is not alone. "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, '**Glory to God in the highest**, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'" (Luke 2:13-14)

Note the great heights of this joy — from the face of earth all the way up to the heights of heaven. Such news captures not only lowly shepherds... but even the hosts of heaven, *who long to look into these things* (1 Peter 1:12).

And as God's glory rises to the highest places, so does our joy. Because we are most satisfied in God when he is most glorified.

In both **Matthew 2** and **Luke 2**, "**great joy**" comes together with worship and praise. "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20). The magi "fell down and worshipped him" (Matthew 2:11).

### Secondly, **Great Lengths**

Christmas joy also goes to great lengths. This is what the angel declared in **Luke 2:10**, "I bring **you** good news of **great joy** that will be **for all the people.**"

**All the people**... Not just kings and high-ranking officials, but blue-collar shepherds. Not just Jews, but Gentiles — even pagan astrologers like the magi. Black and white. Women and men. Laymen and clergy. Plumbers and dentists. This is no tribal joy... but for all kinds of people, in every place, at every time.

This is not a small joy quarantined in Jerusalem... but a **great joy** extended and offered to all nations.

Christian... sons and daughters of God... this **joy** is for **you!!!** As the angel declared... "I bring **you** good news of **great joy!**"

### Thirdly, **Great Depths**

And Christmas joy also goes to great depths. Here is a joy deeper than every fear and grief, deeper than every sorrow and pain.

Before the angel announces “**great joy,**” the shepherds are filled with “**great fear**” (Luke 2:9). This great joy comes into a world of great sin, great fear, great sorrow, great suffering.

In fact, this child, who is Joy Incarnate, will be a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, and it will be his great suffering that secures for us great joy (Isaiah 53:3-6).

From his birth in Bethlehem to his death on a cross, this Joy was great enough to be born in obscurity... be laid in a manger... and have no place to lay his head.

He would be rejected by his own people... delivered over by their authorities... and betrayed by his own friend.

But this **Great Joy** could not be extinguished. It cannot. It is too high, too long, too deep — even for death itself.

The **great heights** of this **joy** rise above our emotions and overshadow our despair, chaos, anxiety, and sorrows... as we are captivated by God's glory, beauty and majesty in the midst of our circumstances.

The **great lengths** of this **joy** extend beyond our insecurities and broken identities... by believing we are now completely accepted and loved in Christ as sons and daughters of the living God.

The **great depths** of this **joy** goes deeper than every fear and grief... deeper than every betrayal and pain that we may have experienced and/or, we may be currently experiencing relationally within our families, or in our marriages... as we remember Jesus was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, who empathizes with our weaknesses.

And our **Great Joy** (who is Jesus) is now with us to the end of the age... strengthening us in every fear... cheering us in every grief... lifting us out of our depression... holding us in all our suffering.

Until the day Jesus replaces every sorrow... Jesus promises, “No one will take your joy from you” (John 16:22).

May the Spirit of God open your eyes afresh to the glories of Christ and give you a new taste of your indestructible joy only found in Jesus!!!

**Close in prayer...**

\* Communion

\* Carpets

\* Prayer