



Sermon Series: Looking Forward to Christmas

To be used with Session 1: Looking Forward with Hope

Sermon Title Possibilities: “No Jesus, No Joy; Know Jesus, Know Joy!”

Scripture: Luke 2:4-14

Connection To Unit Theme: Christmas time is regarded as one of (if not the most) joyous times of the year. We look forward to the music, the gifts, the music, the activities, and the time with our families. However, there are a number of individuals who despise this time of the year with the same intensity with which many of us love it. Everyone’s experience has not been the same, nor does everyone have the same circumstances that make it easy to enjoy the holidays. These and so many other reasons contribute to people’s varying perspectives pertaining to Christmas time. The Word of God provides us some encouragement though, as the story of the Birth of Savior presents to us the possibility of experiencing joy even if we don’t necessarily enjoy this time of the year. Those of who can’t find a reason to look forward to Christmas are not excluded from the JOY that is possible through Jesus Christ.

Introduction: This has been a tumultuous election year, and while we’ve experienced many elections, this year’s seems to be more emotionally charged than anything we’ve seen in a very long time. One contributing factor to this is the belief among many that their quality of life, well-being, and overall joy depends largely upon who is in office. If their candidate is in, then they feel better about their chances. Whereas if the other candidate wins, they begin to worry and doubt that anything can happen. In short, many of us have a tendency to place our trust in human beings to give us what we need.

While there is nothing wrong with supporting a political candidate or even trusting them to make a difference in our lives, the reality is that human beings can only do so much. However, our text in Luke 2 tells us of the arrival of someone that is truly able to not only bring joy, but a joy that is sustainable. To many, this was just another cute baby, but in reality, this was the arrival of the true source of joy, peace, and strength. And He can do way more than any candidate, party, or political philosophy you can name. As long as we know Jesus, joy will forever be possible.

Luke 2:4-7 - “Thank God for Mary & Joseph!”

One of the most difficult responsibilities anyone can have is that of a parent. Parenting is by no means easy, and requires a level of selflessness, maturity, love, and responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. Unfortunately, every child does not have a quality parent. Some of these are this way by choice, while others are this way due to the absence of quality examples. Whatever the situation may be, every child needs a quality parent, because it matters who our children are raised by.

While many of us solely pay attention to the Birth of Jesus and how He was received, we rarely focus on the quality parenting displayed by Mary & Joseph. They didn't have much to work with in terms of resources, but they had faith in God, determination to obey God, and an unyielding love for their child. They did what they had to do to ensure that their child would remain safe. We even see examples of this in Matthew's account (Matthew 2:13-15) when Joseph immediately heeds the warning of the Angel of The Lord and moves his family to ensure that King Herod could not get to them. While we can read the story of Jesus' birth and celebrate the miracle that it was, we can also glean many insights on quality parenting from this story as well. And it was Mary & Joseph's quality parenting that contributed greatly to the joy that we now have the opportunity to experience.

Luke 2:8-12- "He's Here! Govern Yourselves Accordingly!"

One thing that the Black Church can do better than anyone is give the morning announcements. You won't find very many comedians that haven't done at least one impression of somebody doing the church announcements, and many of us likely have a story or two about some funny instances in which the announcements were given. One common phrase that we hear at the conclusion of most announcements is, "please govern yourselves accordingly." In other words, please take the information that you've been provided with, and make the necessary adjustments/applications.

In Luke 2:8-12, an Angel of The Lord had some announcements of his own to make, and it was imperative that all paid close attention. Verse 10 says, "...don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today a savior, who is messiah the lord, was born for you in the city of David." The angel was intentional in the wording that he uses, because he wanted to be clear that the birth of Jesus wasn't just for the people in that particular city, nor was it merely for the individuals living at that time, but this was an announcement that would change the course of the rest of history and all of humankind. It is imperative that all of us take note of this announcement, as our joy, or lack thereof, depends solely upon us knowing Him.

Luke 2:13-14 – "You'll Never See a Party Like This One!"

What are your "must haves" for a good party? What do you absolutely refuse to do without in order to have a good celebration? For some it's good food, while for others it's good music. For some it's nice decorations, while for others it's a particular theme. For someone it's an exceptional venue, while for others it's a quality guest list, but whatever the case may be, all of us have an idea of what it takes to throw a good party. However, no matter how nice some of the parties we can throw down here may be, I guarantee you have never experienced a party quite like the one in today's text.

A portion of Luke 2:13 says, "suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising god..." Jesus has just been born and now the word of His arrival is beginning to spread. However, it is clear that this is much more than simply the birth of a child. This is the beginning of a new day. New possibilities of joy, peace, and love have now arrived. And it's not only humans rejoicing, but Angels are rejoicing. Angels are having a party. Angels are thrilled that Jesus has been born. What's amazing is that the Angels knew that Jesus was coming, so His birth was not a surprise. However, they still celebrated this miraculous moment, not just for the moment itself, but for the future joy that Jesus would bring. It's one thing to throw a party once

something has happened, but it's totally different to throw a party in advance because you know that the best is yet to come!

CONCLUSION

As has been stated previously, Joy is impossible without Jesus. Not only that, but Jesus can provide unspeakable and everlasting joy, that no worldly circumstance can interrupt. The arrival of our Savior was so much more than a miraculous birth, but it was the entrance of our ultimate source of Joy. Some people depend on politicians for Joy, while others depend on their money. Some depend on their careers, while others depend on their talents and abilities. However, this text emphasizes that Jesus is the true source. That's why the songwriter said, "Jesus, you're the center of my joy. All that's good and perfect comes from you. You're the heart of my contentment. Hope for all I do. Jesus, you're the center of my joy." In short, if you want joy that'll stay, try Jesus. He's your only option.

Author Bio

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