

Christmas Gifts Worth Getting

The Joy of the Lord – Ps 16:11

I woke up Thursday morning to the guy on the radio saying that sometimes we get gifts that we're stuck with – they just aren't worth getting
I thought, "Hey, that sounds familiar, that's the idea behind our series this month"
Then I thought I'd better sleep on it, so I hit the snooze button and rolled over

It's true, so many of the gifts we get, aren't worth getting
But some are; Hence the title of our series – Christmas gifts worth getting
There are some gifts that we really can't do without in life
Last week it was the *Love of God*, and this week it's **The Joy of the Lord**

- And who doesn't want that? Who doesn't want a deep-seated happiness and delight?
Anyone? Of course not; Everyone wants to be happy – we're wired that way
Made in the image of God, joy is a virtue we are designed to have and show
In fact, the joy of the Lord is such a pervasive mark of God's people in the Bible, you can barely turn a page without at least running into the concept, let alone the word
All of which means that *The Joy of the Lord* is definitely a Christmas gift worth getting

The question is – *how* do you get it?
I want to look at the Christmas story and the example of those involved, to answer it
So why don't you turn in your Bibles to Luke 1
I'm going to read v39-45; And as I do, keep this in mind . . .

The Joy of the Lord comes to those who . . .

Long for him (Luke 1:39-45)

Read Lk 1:39-45

- The first example of joy here, as a result of longing for the Lord, is found in Elizabeth
Though it's not mentioned explicitly, clearly her tone is one of great joy
V42 says *she exclaimed with a loud cry*

Now I don't know exactly what that looks like between two pregnant women
And I'm certainly not going to risk a rendition of it
But I'm pretty sure it's unbridled joy
Especially when she was saying that Mary was blessed, her baby was blessed, and by implication that she was blessed

Why all the joy? B/c Elizabeth longed for the coming of Christ
Lk 1:6 says that both she and her husband were *righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord*
Which means they would have been waiting and anticipating the coming of the promised Messiah all their lives . . .
Just like their ancestors before them, going all the way back to Aaron, from whom Elizabeth descended
The result of which, was pure joy when his birth was at hand

- Then there's John the Baptist in v44, who *leaped for joy* at the sound of Mary's greeting, and presumably the presence of the Lord in Mary's womb . . .
Even while *he* was still in the womb (read v44)

Elizabeth was joyful b/c Christ's presence fulfilled a life-long longing
And I wonder if the same wasn't true of John the Baptist

I can't prove it conclusively, but given his destiny and the anticipation that must have been associated with that . . .
And the fact that Lk 1:15 says he would *be filled with the HS, even from his mother's womb* . . .
It's not unthinkable that God had so shaped his heart and soul even at that pre-birth stage, to *long* for the One for whom he would eventually prepare the way
Either way, he had joy for the One who was to come

- And finally, there's Mary who like any pregnant woman, waited 9 long months for her child to be born
9 months of anticipation, of longing, of wonder
To birth not just any child, but *the* child, the *Christ* child – the one who be called the *Son of the Most High* (1:32)
And contrary to Elizabeth's joy, hers was a quiet joy of pondering and treasuring these things in her heart (2:19, 51)

All of that to say, that the Joy of the Lord comes to those who long for him
It was true then in Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and Mary; And it's true now

And if you receive him like they did – it doesn't stop, it increases
The more you know and follow the One you love, the more joy you'll have
It's a Christmas gift worth getting

But it doesn't stop there; You must also . . .

Look for him (Luke 2:8-20)

Longing increases your joy, but if that's where it stops, it's to no avail
In fact, longing that does not result in fruition, leads to frustration
Some of you long for joy, but you've done nothing about it thus far in your life
Others of you long for joy, but you've been looking in all the wrong places

And before we're done, I hope to change all that
I hope that you will look for, and find joy, in the One who came to save your soul, and give you life
Just like the Shepherds, looked for and found joy in the baby lying in the manger

- You know the story – they were *keeping watch over their flock by night* (read Lk 2:9-12)
And then all *heaven* broke loose, and what did they do?
Return to their sheep? Sit around and argue about what to do?
Or dissect the Greek nuances or verb tenses that the angel used?
And compare the Septuagint translation of the OT with the Masoretic text to determine the *real* meaning of the angel's words?
No, no, and no

They got on their proverbial horses and piled into their proverbial station wagons, and made a bee line to Bethlehem . . .
To *look* for the One about whom they were just told (v15-16)
With haste – great speed; IOW they looked with a sense of urgency

And no wonder, having received such good news of a *great* joy

And the result of that urgent looking was *more* joy (read v20)

That's joy – glorifying and praising God

And it came as a result of looking for Jesus with a *sense of urgency*

And that same joy can be yours as well, if *you* look for him with a sense of urgency, just like the Shepherds

- Then there were the Wise Men, magi – most likely ancient astronomers
Who saw a star, connected it with the birth of a Jewish king . . .
And traveled who knows how far, or at what cost, to find him
And the Bible says that when they saw the star come *to rest over the place where the child was, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy* (Mt 2:10)

Why? B/c having looked at great cost, with a sense of *great expectation*, they found him
Great joy always follows the fulfillment of great expectation
Like when you get that Christmas gift you've been dying to get all year long
There's great joy b/c your *expectation* has just been met

And the same is true when you look for Christ with great expectation
There's joy inexpressible the Bible says in **1 Pet 1:8-9** –
Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Joy, inexpressible joy, comes to those who *long* for Jesus, and *look* for him with a sense of urgency and expectation . . .
B/c the result is the salvation of your soul

The Joy of the Lord comes to those who . . .

Live for him (Ps 16:7-11)

It's a Christmas gift worth getting, and it comes to those who long for him, look for him, and live for him

Turn to Ps 16:7-11

These verses make a direct connection between living for the Lord and the joy that results (read Ps 16:7-11)

7b – that's to say that the impact of God's counsel for wise living, doesn't end with the daylight hours . . .

But continues even in the stillness of the night, as it's remembered and considered in your heart

That's one of the reasons I try to read the Bible briefly and pray as I go to sleep – b/c it fills my heart with the instruction of God

And I've found that it even impacts my dreams

Not to mention the fact that I wake up thinking about the Lord

The connection between living for the Lord, and the joy that results, is found in v8-9
8 – *I have set the Lord always before me*

That is, I live for him; I consider him and his desires in everything I do

And I'm secure in his presence/protection – *b/c he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken*

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices – there's the joy of living for the Lord

- But it starts with putting him first in all things
I have set the Lord always before me is an expression of obedience and loyalty
As in, "I'm going to keep God in the forefront of my mind, so as to honor him and live for him in all things"
Not just some things, or some *times*; But in *all* things at *all* times

And the result is joy – but you have to put him first
Put God second or third in your life, and your joy will wane
Just ask anybody who's tried

In fact, might that be your problem now?

Maybe you've already given your life to Christ, and u follow him as Lord/Savior . . .
But you're lacking in joy at times b/c there are some things in your heart and mind and life that you have yet to surrender
That you have yet to submit to the Lordship of Christ

Maybe it's an anxious way of thinking, or something you do
And it's robbing you of your joy b/c you haven't fully submitted it to the Lord
Or maybe it's your money, or something you have – and it's robbing you
Or your marriage, or something you want – and it's robbing you

It could be any one of a number of things

The point is – if you don't set the Lord always before you, and submit that thing to him
Your joy will be lacking

- Put him first, and *trust* him
You'll never live for someone or follow someone you don't trust
So if you want the joy of the Lord, you must trust the Lord

You must trust him for your life *now*, like David says in v8b – *because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken* . . .

And you must trust him for your life later, like he says in v9b –

My flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol [grave], or let your holy one see corruption [or see the pit]

A metaphor I think, for the total isolation and abandonment of hell

IOW, according to David's example here, we can be joyful and secure in life now (*my flesh dwells secure*), only when we trust God for our life later

Only when we trust that he will not abandon us when we die, or forsake us to spend eternity apart from him

The Bible calls that kind of trust, faith

And it's necessary in order to live for the Lord, and receive the joy that follows

- And that faith, that trust in God's preservation of our souls, is made all the more sure by the apostle Peter's application of this passage to Jesus himself

You'll find that in Acts 2 where he quotes v8-11 and says that David *foresaw and spoke* about Jesus when he wrote this Psalm (Acts 2:31)

Which means there's a double meaning here Ps 16

David was referring to himself, as our example – that he wouldn't be abandoned to the grave, and neither will we . . .

And he was referring to Christ, our guarantee – who wasn't abandoned to the grave, and therefore neither will we

So our faith, our trust in God for our life, now *and* later, is doubly reinforced by the application of this text to Jesus himself

If you want the joy of the Lord, a Christmas gift worth getting – put him first and trust him with your life, now and forever

- And then, in v11, David captures his thoughts in this great summary by saying . . . (v11)
God's path to life leads to dwelling in his presence, where joy abounds and pleasures never cease
Are you there?

It doesn't mean that you'll never suffer another day of your life – you will

But not without joy; Ever; There will always be *joy* in the midst of your hardship . . .

B/c there will always be *God* in the midst of your hardship

And in his presence is the *fullness* of joy

*If you long for that, and you've been looking for him . . .

And you're ready to live for him . . .

Make a commitment today to put him first, and trust him with your entire life

Then and only then, will you dwell in the presence of the Lord forever, with joy inexpressible and full of glory

- Let's pray – if that's you . . . I want to encourage you to pray with me . . .
So that you can obtain the outcome of your faith, which is the salvation of your soul

Lord, I'm tired of living without you, I'm tired of my sin, and I'm desperate for joy

Will you please forgive me and come into my heart?

I'm ready to put you first, trust you with my life, and live for you from now on

I want the fullness of joy that comes with your presence

Others of you may have already committed your life to Christ, but you've lost the joy

Maybe it's b/c of sin in your life, like King David, and you yearn for him to restore unto you the joy of your salvation

Or maybe you've simply lost God's perspective in life, and your joy with it

Whatever the case, confess it before the Lord, right now

And don't waste another day without the joy of the Lord

Pray

If you just prayed to receive Christ – pick up a New Believer's Packet at the door

There's a card in it so that you can let us know of your decision, and we can pray for u

And some material to help you take the next steps in your newfound walk with Christ