

FBC Service December 14, 2025, Advent Joy: Joy Has Come! Scripture Luke 2:8-20

Slide Image: If there is a single word that describes what Christmas is all about, it's the little word **"JOY."**

Slide: Several of our favourite carols mention it: "Joy to the world, the Lord is come," "O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant," "Shepherds, why this jubilee, why your joyous strains prolong?"

"Good Christian men rejoice, with heart and soul and voice. Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies, with the angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'"

Slide: **How much though do we feel the awe and wonder of Christmas?** Are we stunned by the incredible message that God has come to earth in the person of Jesus to save you and me?

Do we get so wrapped up in the secular trappings of Christmas that we have lost the natural beauty of the season? **The Bethlehem Shepherds embraced it all. So should we.**

It's not always easy to feel joyful. **Joy can be a challenge to all of us.**

We tend to connect it with happiness and think that joy depends on our circumstances.

Today is the third Sunday of Advent, and we're working our way around the various candles of the Advent Wreath. We've seen that the first candle represents Hope, and the second candle represents Peace.

You may have noticed that one of the outside candles is a different colour from the other three. There are three purple candles around the outside of the wreath and one pink candle.

The pink candle is the third candle of Advent which represents Joy, and John and Connie lit it for us.

One of the things people love about Christmas is that it truly is a joyful season.

But I can't help feeling that sometimes the world misses the true joy at the centre of Christmas. Because when you come right down to it, the real joy at Christmas doesn't come from coloured lights and decorations and music, **but from the meaning of Christmas.**

At the heart of Christmas is the astoundingly good news that Jesus Christ was born as a Saviour into this world. From beginning to end the Christmas story is punctuated with various outbursts and moments of joy, and they all centre around the birth of Christ.

You can't get away from it. You can't get around it. You can't spell Christmas without Christ, and you can't enter into **the true joy** of the season without Jesus.

On a hillside outside of Bethlehem, a group of awe-struck shepherds heard an astonishing announcement by an angelic messenger.

He scared the living daylights out of them. That is what it says -- in a rather loose translation. They were terrified, and rightly so, for this was a sudden appearance of a supernatural figure.

I bring you tidings of great joy, the messenger proclaimed. JOY.

When you hear the word joy, what do you think of? How would you define it?

What does a joyful person look like? How do you distinguish a joyful person from a happy person, or a giddy person experiencing a great financial windfall or promotion?

What is it that makes this joy in Luke's Gospel different from these things?

Is it a joy that comes from our circumstances? Is it a state of mind and an orientation of the heart? Is it a settled state of contentment, confidence and hope?

If there is any season when people talk about joy, it's Christmas. It's on cards, in songs, in store windows, and even in the greetings we hear. And yet, in this very season, many feel the opposite, loneliness, anxiety, disappointment, or stress.

Slide: As Christians, we celebrate something far deeper than seasonal cheer.

We celebrate the arrival of true joy, a joy that does not depend on circumstances, on gifts, or on sentiment—but on a Saviour born in Bethlehem, of whom it was said, *“You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

Into our world, the hillside angel declared a message we need just as much today as those shepherds did 2,000 years ago:

“Do not be afraid... I bring you good news of great joy.”

Slide: It Was a Joy Announced from Heaven (Luke 2:10–12)

Joy entered the world that night—not as a feeling, but as a Person.

Imagine the scene: **shepherds—ordinary men**, working an ordinary night shift, when suddenly the night sky explodes with heavenly light.

The greatest message ever spoken to humanity began with: *“Do not be afraid.”*

Why?

Because the world before Christ was full of fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of Rome. Fear of death. Fear of God's judgment.

But the birth of Jesus turns fear into joy. Not just Joy but Good News of Great Joy.

The angel did not say: “I bring you good advice.”

The angel did not say “I bring you a list of rules. The angel did not say “I bring you a spiritual idea.”

No—it was good news. Who among us does not like to hear good news!

Something awesome the shepherds were told.

Something heaven had been preparing since the beginning of time.

It was a joy for all people in the blessing of a Saviour

Slide: Why Did God Announce the News to Shepherds?

Slide: They were the least likely people to receive the announcement of Jesus birth:

This whole thing had to be staggering to men who were marginalized by the world in which they lived. People didn't see them, or when they did, they turned away.

Everywhere they went, they were treated as if the Kingdom was not for them because they were not good enough.

But they were not marginalized by the Lord.

He brought the news to them personally so they would know it was true.

God was telling them: "You have worth," "You are a person of eternal value," "You are seen and loved."

They were not educated. They were not wealthy. They were not religious leaders.

And yet of all people on the face of the earth heaven chose them.

Revealing to us that the message of Jesus is for everyone—the overlooked, the forgotten, the ordinary, the broken, the sinful.

Here on the hills outside Bethlehem the Lord was making a statement.

That Jesus did not come into the world only for the elite and powerful, but for ordinary people like you and me.

Slide: The Joyful Sign: A Baby in a Manger Luke 2:12

The sign was not a trumpet blast, not a palace, not a royal robe.

It was a baby... wrapped in cloths... lying in a manger.

Slide: A Joy Celebrated by Heaven (Luke 2:13–14)

A Multitude of the Heavenly Host

Just one angel was enough—but suddenly the sky filled with an army of heavenly beings.

Heaven could not remain silent any longer.

The night that Jesus was born was the moment prophecy became reality, eternity stepped into time,

God Himself in human form came to dwell with us. And when He did,

Heaven erupted in praise because the greatest chapter of sinful man's redemption had begun.

What a sight and sound that must have been to witness!

A Heavenly Host Proclaiming:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests.”

Notice:

Joy leads to glory to God.

Joy leads to peace on earth.

Joy leads to God’s favour resting on undeserving people.

This is not sentimental peace—it is reconciliation peace.

The peace that comes because the barrier between God and man would soon be torn down by the cross.

The angels rejoiced because Jesus’ birth meant our salvation.

Slide: A Joy Received by Faith (Luke 2:15–17)

The Shepherds’ Response

Here is where the message becomes very practical.

The shepherds did not sit there and debate what they had seen and heard.

They did not wait until morning.

Slide: They did not say, “We’ll think about it.” **They hurried.**

Scripture says:

“They said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.’”

And they went with haste.

They went to find the Saviour. They searched the town. They found the stable.

And there in the quiet, they saw the Promise of God lying in a manger.

The shepherds trusted what the angel had told them.

They Believed the Message

Joy does not come merely from hearing the message—it comes from believing the message.

Some hear the Gospel every year, but it never becomes joy because it never becomes faith.

Joy begins when we say: “Lord I believe.

I receive Your Son as my Lord and Saviour.” Forgive my sins and make my life right with God.

Slide: A Joy Shared with the World (Luke 2:17–20)

The Shepherds Could Not Keep Silent

“When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them.”

“All who heard it were amazed.”

The first evangelists in the New Testament were not preachers, not apostles, not scholars—but shepherds filled with joy.

Joyful hearts overflowing in joyful witness.

They did not explain theology. They did not preach a three-point sermon.

They simply told others: “We have seen the Saviour!”

Slide: And that is still the heart of Christian witness today.

To unashamedly give a reason of the hope and joy within us.

The Shepherds Returned Glorifying and Praising God

They went back to their fields... but they were not the same men.

They looked the same. They talked the same. Nothing external had changed:

Same jobs, same sheep, same responsibilities, same struggles.

But their hearts had changed.

When you have Christ in your heart and life, your surroundings may not change—**but you change.**

Don’t leave the good news of the gospel here in the sanctuary. **Take it with you!** And like the Shepherds, all who have met the Saviour, will never be the same again.

Slide: A Joy Offered to You Today

The message of Luke 2:8-20 is not merely a story of the past.

It is God’s message to us this very moment.

“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.”

Slide: Conclusion: Joy Has Come — Will You Receive Him?

The shepherds went to Bethlehem and found joy in a manger.

This Advent, you are invited to do the same.

Slide: The shepherds never forgot. Mary never forgot.

Their lives were changed forever by what they saw in Bethlehem. **I hope yours will be too.**

They found a joy that the world cannot deliver and cannot deny.

They found a peace no bank account could produce.

Slide: They found a love that no person could ever give them. **They found the Lord. And you can too.**

This is where Christmas becomes intensely personal. It's not enough to say that Christ came for someone else.

Why not make this a Christmas to remember? Not because of the gifts you purchased or opened . . . but because this was the Christmas you went to Bethlehem and saw the King.

Let me now make a simple application. The angel said, *"unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour."* **"Unto you." "For you." He came for you.**

In just a few days Christmas will be here. Families will gather around the tree to open their presents. Already children are counting the hours until that glad moment arrives.

Two thousand years ago God sent a gift wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. **Jesus is God's Christmas gift to you and me.**

But we will never experience Christmas joy until we personally receive that gift - the Lord Jesus Christ. And what is the source of that joy?

"Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people."

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Slide: This Is the Heart of Christmas. God Loved Us Enough to Send His Only Begotten Son. Think of it this way:

He didn't send a committee. He didn't write a book. He didn't send a substitute.

No, when God got ready to save the world, He sent the best that He had - His one and only Son.

The Apostle John said, *"we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world."* (1 John. 4:14)

Slide: And before He was born, an angel said to Mary, *"You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* (Matthew. 1:21)

Slide Image: This is the stupendous truth of Christmas - Immanuel - God with us.

God has come near. Christ has arrived. Joy is here—and His name is Jesus. **Slide: Joy the world, the Lord is come.**