



Freedom Project

So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36)

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December 1, 2021



Dear Friends and Family,

One of the central themes of Christmas is joy. In fact, several of our favorite 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.’”

Yet for many people joy is hard to come by. Between life challenges, family tensions, never-ending to-do lists, financial concerns, and unmet expectations there seems to be more unhappiness than joy. So, where does joy come from? Listen to the words of Luke 2:8-11 to discover the answer.

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”

The angel came with good news of great joy. A Savior has been born who is Christ the Lord. In this simple phrase we find our reason to have joy—Jesus is Savior, Christ, and Lord.

First, Jesus came to be our Savior. Little did the shepherds know when the angel declared to them the good news of great joy that the joy went beyond the birth of a baby lying in a manger. The good news looked to the sinless life that Jesus would live that enabled Him to be our sacrificial lamb. The good news looked to Jesus’ crucifixion where he paid the penalty for man’s sin, and to His resurrection where sin and death were conquered. By His own words, Jesus declared that He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

Jesus is also the “Christ.” The word “Christ” means “anointed one.” It is the word used for “Messiah.” The good news the angel brought was that the long-awaited Messiah had been born. The One who would be the eternal king and deliverer had come. Unlike earthly kings, Jesus is a king who exemplifies the intent of a benevolent and loving ruler. His rule is righteous and beneficial for man. His judgment is fair and perfectly just. He does not seek to fulfill His agenda or show preference to anyone. Instead, He rules the world according to God’s righteous standard.

Jesus is also Lord. In Matthew 1:23 we read—*Behold the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they shall call Him Immanuel which means “God with Us.”* The name “Immanuel” expresses the incarnation of Jesus. God became man! Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, God Himself, came to earth to dwell among us. And in doing so, God made Himself fully known to us through Jesus. Jesus is the very representation and likeness of God. He told His disciples in John 14:9 that anyone who has seen Him, has seen the Father. Prior to the birth of Jesus, God dwelt in the temple, in the Holy of Holies. But once God became flesh in Jesus, man had the opportunity to know God more fully.

Not only does God dwell with us, He also dwells **in** us. Galatians 2:20 says *“I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* When we are born again, we are in union with Jesus Christ who comes to indwell us allowing us to experience “God with us” all the time.

So as we think about joy today and each and every day, we need to remember the good news of great joy the angel gave to the shepherds is also for us. Jesus was born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Jesus, the only Savior who can redeem you and give you eternal life with God forever. Jesus, the long-promised Messiah who came to be the eternal King of Kings who will bring peace and goodwill to men. And finally, Jesus, the one who embodies “God with us,” walking face to face with man during His time on earth, and now walking in personal relationship with those who are born again. Beloved, this is cause for great joy! May you experience the joy of Christmas. Thank you for being a joy in our life.

John and Anna