

JOY-FULL: God's News uniquely brings Great Joy

Ready to share why Jesus brings the best joy to life

Luke 2:10-11 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. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Fire up your imagination for a few moments. Here we go!

If someone suddenly burst through the back door with **the very best news** your ears could hear, *what would you* want to hear?

- For some here this morning, the very best news would be that God has finally revealed to us a **comprehensive cure for cancer**. Cancer is the #2 killer in our country, but deaths from cancer continue a steady decline that began in the 1990's! Still, for a good number listening to my voice today, the news of a cure for cancers could hardly be beat.
- For others, perhaps the news that an anonymous benefactor has taken an interest in you and your future, and has taken steps to completely underwrite your education financially. Bottom line – **all your student debt is gone!** Yes!
- For many, many of you here, something perhaps captured by the word **repentance** would rain down like a refreshing shower on the parched soil of your heart. You long for your son or daughter to come to the Lord in faith, or come back to the Lord after a long time of wandering off. The genuine return of a spouse who left you, now truly broken before the Lord.
- Even more personally, some of you listening to the sound of my voice simply **long for the gray clouds of depression to finally break up** and glide away never to return again. You long for some sustained sunshine, some hope...and if someone would crash through the back doors and promise the cold front was leaving...oh, my, how life-changing that news could be.

The truth is that every person alive faces threats and dangers, or pitfalls and disappointments, all of which are largely beyond our control. Which means that if someone comes up to you and asks, "How's everything?" and you say, "Fine!" you're probably not telling the truth. "Fine" is the response of someone who is actually saying that while not everything is bad—and to be sure some things might be very good—the truth is they don't have the time to unpack that what is truly "eating their lunch," things which they can do almost nothing about. The good news they really need to hear hasn't come their way yet.

But imagine this. What if someone burst through the back door and said,

"Hey, guess what!? Just up George Washington Carver, if you go 2.2 miles north, take a left on 170th one mile, then a right on the next gravel road (510th)...one more mile, look for the white fence on the left, two small red bards. Look in the barn on the left; you'll find a young couple in there. Last night, the young woman birthed a baby. A boy. Yeah...born last night to that young couple. And, well...He's **the SAVIOR**, the Savior God has finally sent...to us!"

Would that mean *anything* to you? Or would that mean *everything* to you?

TODAY'S SEMINAL PROBLEM

You see, the problem we have today is that this news--the news brought by the angel who burst through the sky's door

Luke 2:10-11 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. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

that a **Savior** has been born – virtually means *nothing* to us today. A whole lot of people are somewhere between "I don't need a Savior" and "I don't want a Savior."

Please think about that for a moment. What you see on the screen, what I've just said, explains EVERYTHING that is wrong in today's world. So much of the world -- so many, many people – have decided to live RIGHT THERE. Somewhere between "I don't need a Savior," and "I don't want a Savior." Any chance you are there today?

The fact that God the Son has been born into humanity is not the best news we could hear. We're not sure it is even "good" news. Not even close. Nice, but not necessary. But here's the truth

Great JOY – the GREATEST JOY – comes only from the Person of the Savior born into humanity for us.

You ask – What JOY only comes uniquely from the Savior?

1. Only the SAVIOR can RESTORE THE JOY OF A (real) RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD – He restores

You see, every one of us has relived the painful experience of our first parents, Adam and his wife Eve. [Last Thursday evening, I told an auditorium of ISU students that if anyone will read carefully and reflect thoughtfully on Genesis 1,2,3, you will understand everything you need to understand about life.] We've all lived through our own Genesis 3:1-8

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the **eyes** of both were **opened**, and they **knew** that they were **naked**. And they sewed fig leaves together and made

themselves loincloths. ⁸ And they **heard** the **sound** of the Lord **God** walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife **hid themselves** from the **presence** of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Here's the truth about these 8 verses of Scripture. The greater the reflective investment, the greater the understand of why we now naturally run from God.

After their remarkable creation, Adam and Eve enjoyed a relationship both with God, and with each other, that was open, free, joyful and full of more positive potential than any of us can imagine. Genesis 2:25 "The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." There was no hiding from God nor selfish, manipulative hiding from one another. OT Scholar Kidner uses few but expressive words in his comments:

"In God's true pattern, there was **perfect ease** between them...the fruit of perfect love." [But the tempter arrives.] "It is the serpent's word against God's, and the first doctrine to be denied is judgment...a lie big enough to reinterpret life. The tempter pits his bare assertion *Ye shall not surely die* against the words and works of God. He presents a suicidal plunge as a leap into life.

Eve listened to a creature instead of the creator, followed her impressions against her instructions, and made self-fulfillment her goal. *She took...and ate*: so simple an act, so hard its undoing.

The fig leaves were pathetic enough...the couple, now ill at ease (i.e., hiding from God and from one another) experience a foretaste of fallen human relations in general."ⁱⁱ

Bottom line: they lost their joy. The sound of God drawing near which used to delight now was dreadful. So how is this lost joy re-established? How do we get back to coming out of hiding to eagerly s what David sang to the Lord one night somewhere on a Judean hillside?

Psalm 16:11 You make known to me the path **of** life; in your presence there is **fullness of joy**; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

He said to Zaccheus, "Come down out of that tree; let ME bring joy of generosity back into your house."

He said to the woman at the well, "Here, let ME give you a drink; let ME bring the joy of worship back into your life"

He said to the Pharisee, "It's not your restrictive rules, let ME bring the joy of spiritual birth from above back into your life.

He said to the wealthy young ruler, "You won't find joy in your riches. You'll find it in following ME."

He said to the thief on the cross, "It's not about your shame; it's about joining ME in paradise."

Only the Savior can restore the joy of a real relationship with God.

2. Only the SAVIOR can DELIVER THE JOY OF GOD'S GREAT PROMISES – He delivers

Genesis 3:14 The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.
¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise (crush) your head, and you shall bruise (crush) his heel.”

Will you notice that the first delivering promise of God was made “to the serpent,” to the one who lured Eve and then Adam into deception and plunged their lives into the chaos of sin. Yahweh Elohim – “Yahweh” (the name of God which reveals a promise keeping God) and “Elohim” (the name of God which reveals a power-exercising God) – said to the serpent, *I will send through the woman Someone whose heel you may crush, but who will CRUSH your head.*”

The truth is that we desperately need God to graciously fulfill His promises to us. **We need a Savior to crush the head of the life-destroying Serpent.** Jesus delivered on the first promise God made to a world fallen in sin.

We need a Savior who is willing to take on himself “the iniquity of us all.” Jesus delivered on His Father’s promise of redemption.

We need a Savior who offers us resurrection when every day 152,000 of us die (6,300 each hour). Jesus delivered on His Father’s promise of victory over death.

We need a Savior who opens the door to an eternal future not crippled with the frustration of sin. Jesus delivered on His Father’s promise to bring a restoration of righteousness. This is why Paul by the Holy Spirit would write to the Corinthian church and to all of us,

2 Corinthians 1:20
For all the promises of God find their **Yes** in him.
That is why it is through him that we utter our
Amen to God for his glory.

David Gibson (Idaho Falls ID) has not forgotten what happened to him:

In my senior HS year, I was voted co-captain and most improved player on our basketball team. At the annual sports banquet, I was called up front, presented with two trophies, one for each award. It was a day of great joy of me; I’ve kept those two tiny trophies for over 30 years.

Last year, I drove back to my hometown for a 30 year HS reunion. I arrived early, so I walked through the old HS to see what it looked like after 3 decades. I found the lobby where the sports awards are displayed and looked for the two plaques where my name would be inscribed in honor of my two awards. I found both plaques, and I found that in both cases, the name of my teammates had been substituted where my name

belonged. I'm certain I won the awards. I remember receiving the awards. I still have the two trophies at home. But my name was not on those plaques where it belonged. My promised, enduring "glory" had been stolen from me.

In this sinful world, we are often promised rewards that are not delivered to us. We are foolish to place our hope that the world will guarantee what we need and long for most.

There is a SAVIOR who can restore the JOY of a relationship with God (He restores). There is a SAVIOR in whom ALL of God's promises to us are guaranteed, are "yes" (He delivers).

3. Only the SAVIOR can REPLACE THE JOY LOST IN THE CHAOS OF SIN AND EVIL - He OVERCOMES

Have you ever taken the time to drink in the truth of these verses?

¹John 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was **to destroy** the works of the devil.

Have you circled in verse 8 the most interesting word in that verse? It's the word *destroy*. When I researched it again recently, I had to smile. Because when I first began learning New Testament Greek (Fall of 1974)—the language the NT was written in—the first verb learned was this word.

"Destroy"...the simple verb $\lambda\upsilon\omega$. In the original, it has several meaningsⁱⁱⁱ:

- It can mean "**to unloose, untie**" that which binds, "to release, to set free" from that which has wrapped itself around you and is choking the life God intends. That's what the works of the devil do in your life, and only the Savior can do for you. When quoting Isaiah, Jesus said,

*Is 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the **captives**, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

- It can also mean "**to break up, destroy, to tear down**, bring an end to, abolish, do away with."

Admittedly, I don't know all of your stories, and most of you don't know mine. But if sin and its consequences has wrapped itself around your life (and it is likely it has), there is only one Person who can unloose it and destroy it...and replace it with His joy.

Only the Savior can restore the JOY of relationship
Only the Savior can deliver the JOY of God's promises
Only the Savior can recover the JOY lost in sin's binding chaos

4. Only the SAVIOR can GUARANTEE THE JOY OF GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN FOR BLESSING - He ASSURES

To be "in Christ" is to have everything that matters. To be "in Christ" is everything.

Ephesians 1 (p.976 ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us **in Christ** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us **in him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons **through Jesus Christ**, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us **in the Beloved**. ⁷ **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth **in Christ** ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things **in him**, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ **In him** we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope **in Christ** might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ **In him** you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed **in him**, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

It's impossible to miss. 10 times the Spirit of God moves Paul to write that ALL of God's blessing comes to us when we are "In Christ," "in Him." All of what is coming is found in Him.

CONCLUSION

Great JOY – the GREATEST JOY – comes only from the Person of the Savior born into humanity for us.

Only the Savior can restore the JOY of a forgiven, guilt-free relationship with God. Only the Savior can deliver the JOY of God's full promises to us. Only the Savior can replace the binding, chaos of sin with freedom and JOY. Only the Savior can deliver the JOY of God's blessing into the wonderfully long eternity ahead.

It's all found in Him. Is He YOUR Savior today? Have you turned from trying to create your own joy? From wandering around, from guessing, from hoping but not finding, from trying this and that but never landing in lasting, true JOY?

Only the Savior can bring this into your life. Which is why the angel said, "I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people."

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¹ According to Betsy McKay, "Suicides, Overdoses Crimp Life Expectancy," *WSJ* 11.29.2018, A1,A6

² Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1967, 1975), 66-69.

³ From BAG, 484.