

Christmas Eve 2007

Sermon: JOY!

**Preached by Rev Wayne F Schmidt
Senior Pastor, Salem Lutheran Church, Orlando Florida**

St Luke, Chapter 2:

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,* the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

Carol: Joy To The World

Verse 1

Joy to the world! the Lord is come; *Let earth receive her King*; Let every heart prepare him room, And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature sing, And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Verse 2

Joy to the world! *the Savior reigns*; Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Verse 3

No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as, the curse is found.

Verse 4

He rules the world with *truth and grace*, And makes the nations prove The glories of His righteousness, And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love, And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Christmas Eve Sermon:

"Joy to you this eve!"

The Hebrew word for joy means: "To leap or to spin around as with gladness and bliss." So let us "spin around" and with gladness greet one another. 'Merry Christmas!'

On a rating scale of 1 to 10 how happy of a Christmas is it this year?

The message delivered the First Christmas Eve is not: "I bringing you good news of great HAPPINESS." "Makarios", the Greek word for happiness, doesn't not appear in the text. "Makarios" depicts a person who has good fortune, wealth, health and the leisure to enjoy it. "Makarios" depicts the freedom the ancient rich were seen as having from daily cares and worries of life. The Greek word which appears in the Christmas message is: "Chairo" "I bringing you good news of great JOY." The ancients regarded "Chairo" as the "good mood of the soul." Joy was about having "an inner sense of well-being"

"Joy" and "Happiness". We mistake happiness for joy. God does not. We interchange them as words, regarding "joy" and "happiness" as synonyms. God does not. "Chairo " --"joy" or "rejoicing"-- appears 330 times in the Holy Scriptures. "Makarios" --"happiness"-- appears only 26 times. In God's eyes, there are huge difference between "happiness" and "joy."

Happiness is external.
Joy is internal.

Happiness is based on circumstances.
Joy is based on God.

Happiness comes by chance.
Joy comes by choice.

Happiness is fickle. it comes and goes
Joy stays, it endures and prevails.

Happiness is BECAUSE OF our situation;
Joy is IN SPITE OF our situation.

The Christmas Message states Christ comes to bring us "Joy"
We are searching for "Happiness." So how are you doing in your search for happiness? According to the ancients: Happiness is about having no problems; Happiness is about having everything go your way. I would love for things to go my way—but seldom do they. I would love for my problems

to go away but even if they do -- new one arise. How many here have "everything just the way you want it" ? How many here have "no problems"?

"Joy" is not about getting rid of PROBLEMS. Joy rids you of the anxiety regarding those problems. "Chairo " is what God gives you in the midst of trouble. People who have joy have the knowledge, the certainty, the conviction that God is ultimately in control. People who have joy have a peace within because they live life from the perspective of God. People, -- JOY has one source: GOD in Christ Jesus!

"I bring your good news of great joy..."

On a scale of 1 to , how happy a Christmas it is this year for me? It is one of the happiest. It is Cadyn's First Christmas! Cadyn is my grandchild. On the other hand, this Christmas is one of the saddest. We are saying our last goodbyes to my wife's mother, Audrey. As we speak she is in hospice crisis care. These are her final hours of life. This is our last Christmas together.

Amid great happiness, amid great sorrow, we have good news of great JOY! She is going to be with Jesus. And Jesus is going to be with us.

"I am bringing you good news of great joy"

Preacher Billy Sunday once said, "The trouble with many is they have got just enough religion to make them miserable." Christ came not to make us MISERABLE! Christ came to bring JOY to your and my world! How do you attain the JOY God offers? The first thing -- get rid of your ol' religion! Rather-- get into a **living relationship** with Christ.

(Refer to the lyric of "Joy To The World" as printed in bulletin)

JOY TO THE WORLD! Please open up your bulletin and locate the lyrics to this marvelous carol. In the first stanza of this carol, see the italicized words: "*Let earth receive her king.*" Your Spirit craves to be in a relationship with God the same way your body craves: food, exercise and rest. Your inner being hungers for God. Receive Jesus. In the second stanza see the line italicized: "*The Savior reigns!* " After receiving Christ as your Savior, let him reign as Lord of your

life. His goal, His task, His aim is not to make you miserable but lead you into JOY. "*No more ...sins and sorrow grow*" we see in the third stanza. Though sin promises happiness, sin in brings only sorrow. Change your ways to God's ways. Stanza four -- in the awe and wonder of *God's grace and truth*, accept your acceptance! Live your life as an "ALLELUEIA!" to God.

Christ came not to make us MISERABLE! Christ came to bring JOY to your and my world!? This Christmas I have a gift for you. If your religion is making your miserable, get rid of your "religion" ! And, get into a **living relationship** with God in Christ!

"Joy" to you this eve!"

Pastor Schmidt