

REAL NEWS OF REAL JOY

Luke 2:10

INTRODUCTION

Star Wars crawl.

Thus begins the saga of Luke Skywalker and the Jedi knights and all the other characters in Star Wars.

It's a great story of good conquering evil. But it is just a story. It is not real.

Stories can be fun to watch and entertaining. They may reflect reality or be based on some truth; some movies begin, "The following is based on true events." But that only means a few things may be true but the rest is all made up.

A good number of people treat the Christmas story in the same way. Most would say it is real, or at least based on true events. Others would say it is just a nice story—nice, but not true. It is something that is entertaining in December and then left behind for another year.

However, on that first Christmas for the shepherds, it wasn't just an entertaining story. It was real. It was also life-changing.

And God's intent was that the Christmas story was not just for the shepherds; it was for all the world.

This Christmas season, we are looking at the message the angel brought to the shepherds.

*The angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy** that will be for all the people. Luke 2:10^{ESV}*

I want us to focus on the words, *good news of great joy*. The message God sent to the shepherds through the angel was that the birth of Jesus was good news of great joy.

Here's the **main point** I want you to latch on to:

Through the birth of Jesus, God has brought us good news of great joy to experience and to share.

There are two features of this message I want to highlight. First:

I. IT IS GOOD NEWS

News is fact—at least it is supposed to be. That means news is to be truth. News is reality. But it seems like today lots of news we get is partial truth, or even fake news—news that is supposed to be true, but isn't. Or the news we hear has a political slant and you can't tell what is objective, true and real.

The news the angels brought to the shepherds was true. It really happened.

News also means that something has been done. It has been accomplished. This

distinguishes it from advice. Advice urges you to make something happen. News urges you to recognize something that has already happened and to respond to it.

God has not only accomplished the birth of Jesus, he set into motion a plan that totally and completely brought forgiveness to all people that was then accomplished by Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he accomplished the plan of God that brought us salvation. It is news, good news. God and Jesus did it all. And we don't have to do anything.

That's why Paul stated it this way:

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. Ephesians 2:8-9 ^{NLT}

God doesn't tell us to earn our salvation. He tells us the news that our salvation has been accomplished and all we have to do is to receive it. This is great news.

The second feature of the news that God brought to the shepherds is that:

II. IT IS FULL OF GREAT JOY

I think most people could use some joy, especially at this Christmas season. Unfortunately for many people, the Christmas season becomes the stressful season. And for some people who have lost a loved one during the Christmas season, it is a depressing season. We have turned this joyful season into a stressful season by what we have made it to be. Isn't it ironic that a celebration of the Prince of Peace has become a time of stress!

The angel announced to the shepherds that he brought good news of great joy.

What is joy?

Def of joy: a feeling of great pleasure and happiness. It is not just a state of mind. It is a feeling that comes over you.

What brings you joy? I made a list of some things that bring me joy:

That we are loved;

That we aren't facing things that we can't handle because God is in control of my life and everything that touches my life;

That we are reconciled with God and now have peace with God;

That we have a guaranteed hope for the future;

That we have the assurance of living forever with God in heaven;

That we are in God's family and God is our heavenly Father;

That we have no fear of the present or the future because we belong to God;

That we can know the truth and do what is right in God's eyes and please him;

That we have contentment and have a sense of everything is under control and OK in my life.

That we have brothers and sisters in Christ to support us and encourage us.

These things bring us joy. But notice the angel didn't just say, "I bring you good news of joy." He said, "I bring you good news of great joy." Literally, it reads, mega joy. It is beyond just joy; it is great, above standard joy.

But what makes it great joy? There are two aspects of the joy that God gives to us through Jesus that make it great joy:

- The joy that God gives is repeatable and continual

I think it is not only the intensity of the joy, but also that it is repeatable. In other words, the joy that God brings can be a joy that repeats itself over and over again. Time and time again, God gives me this joy. Circumstances and events can bring people joy, but there is a short-coming: The circumstances and events are one-time, non-continuing.

Let me illustrate. There are many things that bring us joy, but they are often one-time events. To have joy again means I have to experience that event again. When I got married, I experienced great joy. But I am not going to get married again, so that event won't happen again to bring me joy.

In college, my football team twice won the Rose Bowl. Each time was a great time of joy. But I will never have that experience again since I will never play football again.

Many events of joy will never happen again.

Human joy from the same event also often lessens with each time you experience it.

E.g. remember the first time you drove by yourself? You got in the car and could go anywhere. There was lots of joy in doing that. Now, when I drive, I'm not all excited that I get to drive. I don't get any joy out of driving. It's just something I do.

But with Jesus, there is a continual sense of joy. Peter gives us this picture of continual joy in our relationship with Jesus:

*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and **are filled** with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you **are receiving** the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9 ^{NIV}*

The phrases, **are filled** and **are receiving**, are in the present tense, so you could translate them as, **are continually being filled**, and **are continually receiving**. You could translate these verses in this way:

*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and **are continually being filled** with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you **are continually receiving** the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9 ^{NIV}*

What we have through Jesus and through the indwelling Spirit is a continual experience of the life we have in Jesus.

Jesus also referred to the H.S. as a continual source of joy:

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14 ^{NIV}

A spring of water continually flows. That's the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit. The joy is also great joy because:

- The joy that God gives springs up from our heart

Happiness and joy are often superficial. But the joy that God gives touches us down to our heart. Jesus referred to this when he was in Jerusalem for one of the celebrations: *On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” ³⁹ (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. John 7:37-39 ^{ESV}*

Through the Holy Spirit, we have a river of joy that flows from our heart. It is a continual flow of the experience of Jesus that begins in our heart.

The birth of Jesus has brought great joy.

Finally, this good news of great joy is:

III. IT IS TO BE SHARED WITH OTHERS

Can you imagine finding a cure for cancer and not sharing it with others? That would be grossly immoral. That’s not much different than what we have with the cure for sin.

After the shepherds saw Jesus, Luke says:

After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished. Luke 2:17 ^{NLT}

The good news about Jesus is to be shared with all people.

After the birth of Jesus, God did not send any more angels to tell people about Jesus. It was now up to people to tell others about Jesus. That’s our responsibility.

Next Steps:

1. *This good news is for you. Receive it by receiving Jesus as your Savior.*
2. *Do you know someone who needs to hear the good news? Make a point of telling the good news of great joy.*