

Sermon: Pastor Don Nelson      Sermon: December 13, 2009  
 Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“THE KING OF JOY”**  
**Luke 2:1-20**

❑ **“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”** Luke 2:10.

☑ Not a little joy, not measured joy, not moderate joy – **“great joy”!** Extreme, out-of-control joy, like Scrooge experiences at the end of A Christmas Carol!

Ebenezer Scrooge is a cold-hearted materialist who despises humanity. Decades ago he sacrificed the love of a good woman on the altar of greed. Now he snubs every invitation to friendship from his only relative. Confronted with the plight of the poor, Scrooge retorts that they should die quickly and decrease **“the surplus population.”**

On Christmas Eve four terrifying spirits haunt Scrooge. They warn that by his hatred and greed he is condemning himself to eternal torment. Ebenezer is transformed. He becomes a new man.

Dizzy with joy, he cries: **“I don’t know what to do! I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man.”**

**“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people”!** Doesn’t that sound good? Aren’t all of us longing for “great joy”?

☑ Our desire echoes in seasonal songs, like *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, *Holly Jolly Christmas*, *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, and so forth. And no wonder: Christmas is closely associated with joy even

among many secular people. We expect it to be **“the most wonderful time of the year”** (or hope it will be, or at least think it *should* be).

Yet the joy of the season is, at best, ephemeral: it is there for one brilliant moment, and then it is gone.

Of course, it often is *not* at its best: the glimmering lights and shimmering trees and glittery music don’t live up to their promise. The sweets taste great, but leave you feeling a little sick. The gifts are just what you wanted, but do not really satisfy.

☑ But wait, it gets worse: 45% of the respondents to one survey {Depression at Christmas} dread Christmas; 65% say it makes them feel lonely, even when they spend it with loved ones; among patients with depression 57% report that Christmas intensifies their misery. Those figures include people of every conviction, but Christians are not immune.

**“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”** That is what the angel declared. So what is robbing us of that joy?

🔑 This is the key (especially when we are not contending with some recent tragedy): Many rephrase the angel’s message as, **“I bring you great joy.”** They don’t come out and say it; yet their expectations and actions reveal that this is the message they hear and receive.

☹ What’s missing? The “good news”!

❑ Look again at the entire announcement. Luke 2:10-11: **“The angel said to [the shepherds], ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you *good news* of great joy that will be for all the people.’** And this is the news:

**“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”**

☛ The angel identifies Christ Jesus by three titles ~

① Jesus is Savior. This title emphasizes the essential purpose of Christ’s incarnation.

■ In Matthew 1:20-21 an angel prophesies to Joseph that Mary **“will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”**

Sin is corruption, disbelief, rebellion against God, and self-worship. All who sin – and that includes every one of us – bear a crushing load of blame. But Jesus saves us from the culpability of sin.

Sin promises freedom but it always enslaves us with defeat, decay and death. If its power is not broken it will, in the end, cast us into hell. But Jesus saves us from the power of sin, and its ultimate effects.

☼ Hear the **“good news of great joy”**: Jesus is the Savior. In him we can be saved from the guilt and bondage of sin! In him we can have life and freedom!

② Jesus is Messiah (a word which means, *Anointed One*). This title accentuates the essential means by which Christ will save his people.

★ In the Old Testament anointing is a sign that God: has appointed a person for an exceptional purpose, is present with them in a unique way, and is equipping them with the resources they need for the mission. An individual had to fit 1 of 3 categories to be anointed: he was either a king, a priest or, less frequently, a prophet.

■ Jesus is *the* {Rev 19:16} **“KING OF KINGS,”** and his kingship is like no other. He came {Mt 20:28} **“not to be served, but to serve.”** His reign is built on Love, Grace, and Truth. He is the King we need.

■ Jesus is *the* {Heb 4:14} **“great high priest,”** {Heb 7:26} **“holy, blameless, pure,”** who intercedes for us with God. By his death He created a new covenant, in which we {Heb 9:15, NLT} **“can receive the eternal inheritance.”** He is the Priest we need.

■ Jesus is *the* {Acts 3:22} **“Prophet”** whom God **“[raised] up for”** us. As the {Jn 1:14} **“Word made flesh”** He communicates God’s essence. His teaching {Jn 7:16} **“comes from the [Father] who sent”** him. He speaks {Jn 6:68} **“the words of life.”** He is the Prophet we need.

☼ Hear the **“good news of great joy”**: Jesus is the Messiah. As King, He grants us citizenship in God’s kingdom! As Priest, He makes us partners in the new covenant! As Prophet, He gifts us with the Word of God!

③ And Jesus is Lord. This title underscores the essential new relationship Christ mediates between God and humanity.

■ At Jesus’ resurrection and ascension his Father {Php 2:9-10} **“exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”**

■ When this word is fully accomplished many will bend the knee in fear and dread, because they are hostile to Jesus. But in his goodness God has empowered us to willingly {Php 2:11} **“acknowledge**

**that Jesus Christ is Lord.”** His claim on us is legitimate, for He did not exploit deity {Php 2:6-8, TNIV/NLT} **“to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.”** Then **“he obediently humbled himself even further by dying...on a cross”** – all for our benefit.

Being convinced of this, you and I are free to serve Jesus in love and obedience. There is no fear or dread in our submission – only the blessing of true liberty and {Jn 10:10, NLT} **“life in all its fullness.”**

✻ Hear the **“good news of great joy”**: Jesus is the Lord. In him we experience true freedom! In surrender to him our servanthood glorifies God and helps to transform the world!

All who abbreviate the message to **“I bring you great joy”** doom themselves. At best, they experience false joy that is hollow and fleeting; at worst, they suffer real despair that strangles the soul.

It does not have to be that way. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are perfectly able and eager to bless us with true, abiding, abundant joy this Christmas, for the rest of our time-bound lives, and in eternity.

**“Do not be afraid,”** the angel said. **“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”**

*Jesus is the King of Joy!*