

# The Joy of Christmas

Luke 2:1-11

It's like heaven was saying, "Have a merry, merry Christmas!" A certain song writer put it this way, "We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Spread the tidings all around..."

The gospel is good tidings of great joy! God wants us to be happy!

Part of our Declaration of Independence that was drawn up by our forefathers says: "We possess certain unalienable rights, among those being life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Who is there among us who does not wish to be happy? Happiness is the one thing all men are seeking. One man seeks it in one way, and another man seeks it in another way, but all men are in pursuit of it.

Radio talk show out of Eugene, Oregon: callers voiced their dissatisfaction with a recent city law barring Christmas trees from city property "because a decorated tree may be construed as a religious symbol". One caller, a mother, said she was so offended by the ruling that she cancelled her families tickets to see the Nutcracker Suite at the Hult Performing Arts Center because there is no Christmas tree on display in the building this year. She said, "that's one of the things children really get a thrill about seeing, no matter whether they are atheists, Jews, Moslems, or Christians. Why should they be deprived of that joy?"

I'm certainly not here to tell you that the joy of Christmas is based upon whether or not a Christmas tree is allowed on government property. Speaking of Christmas trees, however, an article in The World newspaper caught my eye this week. Our state of Oregon is being honored to select a tree to be delivered to Wash. D.C. to be displayed on the lawn of our nations White House. The date is not until 2002, but some are already "ga ga" over it and have begun the selection process of the tree, the handmade ornaments to decorate it, along with 10-thousand lights.

The tree that we as believers ought to boast about and rejoice in is that which was fashioned into a cross. The Bible says, "*Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*" The apostle Paul testified in *Gal 6:14 God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

*Matt 2:9-10 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

It appears that the star was a luminous meteor, perhaps at no great distance from the ground. It is not unlikely that they lost sight of it after they had begun their journey from the East. It is probable that it appeared to them first in the direction of Jerusalem. They concluded that the expected King had been born, and immediately commenced their journey to Jerusalem. When they arrived there, it was important that they should be directed to the very place where he was, and the star again appeared. It was for this reason that they rejoiced. They felt assured that they were under a heavenly guidance, and would be conducted to the newborn King of the Jews.

God will guide those who desire to find the Saviour. Even if for a time the light should be withdrawn, yet it will again appear, and direct us in the way to the Redeemer.

*Acts 8:30-31 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*

*Acts 8:39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

The greatest joy you'll ever have in life will come when, after someone guides you through the scriptures, you put your faith in the LJC!

When we are guided to him, our hearts should overflow with joy and praise; and we should humbly and thankfully follow every direction that leads to the Son of God.

Israel was led by a pillar of fire to the promised land; the wise men by a star to the promised Seed, who is himself the bright and morning Star, **Rev 22:16**.

In the course of their journey, the light of the star was taken from them for a time, just as sometimes the delightful presence of God is withdrawn from His people. There are times when we walk by faith alone, and not by sight, as these men did; but oh! when the light comes back again, when, after hearing all the chattering of false priests and scribes, and all the talk of Herod the great one, they see the star again, how glad they are!

It does not say, 'They saw Mary and the young child,' the young child is put **first**, they came to see him; and it does not say that 'they fell down and worshipped **them**.'" If ever there was an opportunity for Mariolatry, surely this was the one, when the child was as yet newly born, and depended so much upon his mother.

It was customary in the East to show respect for persons of distinction by making presents or offerings of this kind. This custom is still common in the East, and it is unusual there to approach a person of distinguished rank without a valuable present.

The joy of Christmas is not dependent upon whether or not we receive gifts from someone. If gifts are exchanged, our joy is really not based on what we get, but on what we give. A gift that is given apart from our own selves is meaningless. Presents ought to go beyond doing what is customary or proper or out of a sense of obligation. The true motive for giving ought to be love, for "*God so loved the world, that he gave...*"

The offerings here referred to were made because they were the most valuable that the country of the wise men produced. They were tokens of respect and homage, which they paid to the newborn King of the Jews. They showed their high regard for him, and their belief that he was to be great. The fact that their deed is recorded in this way shows us that we should offer our most valuable possessions, our all, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Wise men came from far to do him homage, and bowed down, and presented their best gifts and offerings. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were thought by ancient commentators to show recognition of Jesus as King, Son of God, and one destined to die, respectively.

It is right that we give to him our hearts, our property, our all.

One man seeks money because he thinks that money will make one happy.

Another man seeks worldly pleasure because he thinks that worldly pleasure will make one happy. Still another seeks learning, whether it be that of science, or philosophy, or history, or literature, because he thinks that learning brings the true joy; but they are all in pursuit of the one thing: happiness.

A now deceased film star is said to have made this statement at the height of her career in the 1950's. (I believe it was Marilyn Monroe). "I have money, beauty, glamour, personality and popularity. I should be the happiest woman in the world, but I am miserable. Why?"

You can have the same joy this Christmas as was experienced by women such as Elizabeth and Mary. After Gabriel told the virgin Mary that she would conceive a child by the Holy Ghost and give birth, she went into the hill country with haste and told her cousin Elizabeth the joyous news, who later testified...

*Luke 1:44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy... 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

*1 Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (NIV: "Even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.")*

Many years ago there was a young lady who always wore a golden locket that she would not allow anyone to open or look into, and everyone thought there must be some romance connected with that locket or that in that locket must be the picture of the one she loved. The young woman died at an early age, and after her death the locket was opened. Everyone wondered whose face they would find within. In the locket was found a little slip of paper with these words written upon it, "Though I have not seen Him, I love Him." Her Lord Jesus was the only lover she knew and the only lover she longed for. She had gone to be with Him, the one object of her whole heart's devotion, the unseen but beloved Savior.

The apostle Peter informs us (and many of us do not need to be told, for we know it by experience) that those who really believe on Jesus Christ, our unseen, but ever living Lord and Savior, rejoice with "inexpressible and glorious joy." The Greek word translated "joy" is a very strong word, describing extreme joy or jubilant joy. The word "inexpressible" declares that this jubilant joy is of such a character that we cannot, by any possibility, explain it

adequately to others. Everyone who really believes on the Lord Jesus does indeed rejoice with a jubilant joy that is beyond all description! Others may have a certain amount of joy, a certain measure of gladness, but the only people who really know "inexpressible and glorious joy" are those who, as a result of their faith in Christ, are filled with the Holy Ghost.

*Luke 10:17, 20*

*17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

*20 -21 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

*Acts 8:8 And there was great joy in that city.*

*Acts 16:34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

You can have fulness of joy at this Christmas season - a joy that transcends troubles - a joy that leaps the walls of opposing circumstances - a joy that endures even until death - a joy that increases and abounds both now and eternally. It's the joy of the Lord, and no one can take it from you!

This salvation will give you a great desire to sing and shout and rejoice in the Lord always!