

Unexpected Joy

The Shepherds

Christmas Through Their Eyes – part 3

Luke 2; December 18, 2016

DAY 1: What is joy?

Galatians 5:22-23 but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

1. Ask the average Joe on the street to define “joy” and you’ll hear the word “happiness.” What we naturally assume is that happiness equates to some of the following:

- a. The people that are important to me love me.
- b. I am at least moderately successful.
- c. I/we get away from some time “for ourselves.”
- d. My circumstances are relatively free of hardship and strife.

2. What would you add to the list in #2?

3. The paradox is that these pleasant circumstances bring a type of happiness, but it is:

- a. Fleeting, at best, and
- b. Liable to change at any moment.

Yet, we cling to that notion of happiness as if that’s the route to happiness!

4. The idea of there being another route to happiness seems dubious. Why? Because we define:

- a. What joy is,
- b. How it’s attained
- c. That it’s under our control.

5. But by doing that, we’ve trapped ourselves!

- a. We’ve cut off joy from it’s deepest and most reliable source,
- b. And even lesser “joys” must pass through our “filters!” We miss out on so much!

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: The unexpected source of joy.

Luke 2:8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. [9] An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

Luke 2:10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

1. The shepherds were terrified of the great angel that appeared in the night sky. But instead of terror, the angel announces the very opposite: "great joy!"

2. What was the essence of the "good news?"

3. The good news "*of great joy.*" Why is this an announcement of great joy?

4. The "great joy" is for "all the people!" It is available to everyone!

5. What kind of joy do you think the angel is talking about?

6. Why don't more people experience this kind of joy?

7. How does this news of the angel strike you?

8. When do you experience this kind of joy? What keeps you from experiencing more of this kind of joy?

DAY 3: My need of a savior!

Luke 2:11 "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

1. Ask most people if they need a savior and they think you're loony. They'll tell you "I'm basically a good person. Why would I need a savior?"
2. What people are not aware of is this: our sin nature is the great joy robber. It robs us of joy, and it robs us of giving joy.
3. Most people muddle along in life expecting to find joy in their job, their marriage, their kids, their parents, their toys, their status in life, or their accomplishments. On one hand it seems "reasonable." One problem is that these very expectations damage the very people we claim to love. Expectation is like a weed killer. I can spray my weeds on Saturday but during the next week what happens to the weeds? They flourish!!! Why? The weed killer kills the weeds by making them grow faster than their roots can sustain them. Expectations are like that. They appear to be reasonable but in the end they damage relationships. They suck the joy out of relationships.
4. Think about the expectations you *really* have of others. If you are having a difficult identifying them, think of it this way. List the times when you have been angry with others:

<u>Who you were angry with:</u>	<u>Why you were angry:</u>
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5. What strikes you about your list?
6. What does this list tell you about your *real* hopes for how joy will "happen?"
7. We "naturally" and sinfully expect others to do what only God can do for us. This is one reason we need a savior!

DAY 4: The Key to Joy is the Baby!

Luke 2:12 "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

1. The stunning answer to finding joy is not the next vacation, the next promotion, a good health report from the doctor, or a nice date night.

2. The key to joy is relational in nature, with the God of the universe!

3. What strikes you about this?

Luke 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Luke 2:17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,

¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

4. What reasons made the shepherds so joyous?

5. What differences do you see between them and you?

DAY 5: What is joy? When does it happen?

1. Look up “joy” in the bible and you’ll find that word appearing 222 times! In the following verses, underline or jot down the most cogent points you see about how we experience joy.

Psalms 4:7 You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Nehemiah 8:9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep...." ¹⁰ Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." ¹¹ The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve." ¹² Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

Nehemiah 12:43 (at the dedication of the finished wall protecting Jerusalem) And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

*Esther 8:15 (when the plot to annihilate the Jews was overturned)
Then Mor'decai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. ¹⁶ The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. ¹⁷ And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.*

Psalms 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

Psalms 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.