

December 17, 2017 -

John 16:16-24 -

"Christmas, a time of Rejoicing"

### Introduction:

The Washington D.C. Metro is currently being sued for rejecting a Christmas advertisement because of its promotion of religion. When Catholics wanted to put a Christmas ad on public buses and kiosks in Washington D.C., they were told no. First Baptist Church Pastor Robert Jeffress said that D.C. Metro is not only adding to the war against Christmas, but on Christianity as well. The advertisement showed an illustration of shepherds and sheep walking under the Star of David, with the phrase "FIND THE PERFECT GIFT" written across it. Jeffress said that he sees no harm in the advertisement and that it's only encouraging Americans to go to church on Christmas Day. Satan will use whoever and whatever to rob our world of the true joy and meaning of Christmas. This inspired me to put the walkway sign up and to prepare this message for this morning. The world needs to find joy and rejoice in a God who loves them because people try to find joy in their circumstances.

### I Joy, defining the virtue.

1. We tend to equate "happiness" with joy but they are two totally different ideas because they each emanate from a different source. One comes from the world around us. The other originates directly from the Spirit of the Living God in us. Happiness is conditioned by and often dependent upon what is "happening" to me. If people treat me good and if things are going well in my life, then I'm happy. If my circumstances aren't favorable then we can be unhappy but we can still have joy.

Joy transcends the events and disasters which may plague God's people. Joy is a divine dimension of living that is not shackled by circumstances. Christmas is to be a time of joy, rejoicing in celebrating the birth of Christ. Joy occurs 165 times in 155 verses in the KJV Bible. That is very significant.

The Hebrew word means, "to leap or spin around with pleasure." In the New Testament the word refers to "gladness, bliss and celebration." Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit therefore to have the fruit of joy ripen in our lives is to recognize the journey involved in getting there. It takes time, diligence, patience, and hard work to make a grapevine produce grapes. It is the same with joy the fruit of the spirit; it takes deepening our relationship with our heavenly Father to know all His promises.

Folks, our lives do not change nor do our circumstances because it is Christmas time. I think some people who lack the Christmas joy are discouraged at Christmas because their circumstances are unhappy. Christmas is not about our happiness it about the joy of the Christ.

In fact, numerous studies confirm that there is an increase in both the numbers and severity of calls by depressed individuals during the holiday season. A survey a few years ago asked people if they were looking forward to Christmas. While most answered "Yes," far too many said "No." When asked why, they gave a variety of answers, "Christmas reminds us of things

that ought to be, but are not. · 80% of the families interviewed (80 families in all) experienced stress at Christmas. 83% of those interviewed experienced difficulties meeting the extra expenditures. Over 50% of the mothers interviewed felt overwhelmed to make sure everyone has a good time. This is not what our father intended from the incarnation of His Son.

We do understand that some are struggling in their relationship with God maybe due to suffering. Some are angry with God because of a hardship and Christmas just brings up all that anger and bitterness towards God. They are hurting and God seems silent and Christmas is a reminder of a relationship they once had with Christ. God is absent from their life at Christmas. Christmas can become somewhat depressing. I want to suggest to you today that no matter what the circumstances are one can still have the joy of Christmas. ---Joy to the World...

If there is anything that ought to characterize Christmas, it is joy! Christmas is God's gift to all mankind and the secret in finding this joy is in its very meaning. Christ came into the world to save sinners. The angel announced in **Luke 2:10-11** this was great joy! Let us not deny ourselves this joy of Christmas by making a conscious effort to...

## II Experience the Joy Christ Brings

**Jn 15:11** These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and [that] your joy might be full.

1. Jesus spoke many times to His disciples about His joy being complete and full in them. His disciples were filled with joy as they realized who they were, children of God and joint heirs with Christ (**Rom. 8:15-18**). They had been dead in their sins but were now made alive in Christ (Rom. 6:4). They had once been helpless victims of death, but now death had no hold over them (1 Cor. 15:55-58).

2. Since chapter 13 of John Jesus has been dealing with the sorrowing disciples; all of this taking place the night before his death, the purpose for which he was born... In all of this Jesus attempts to alleviate their sorrow with promises and wonderful hopes that will turn to joy. I believe the comfort that Jesus gives in our lives is his concern, that we know His joy and peace and comfort. In verse 20, Jesus says, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Here is the principle that this very event that caused your grief will be the very event that causes your joy.

3. It is the idea that he takes the sorrow and turns it into joy. The same event that causes grief causes happiness. That's the structure of the Greek. His sorrow shall be turned into joy. He doesn't say your sorrow will be replaced by joy. It will become joy. Now that's fantastic. The thing that plunges you into grief will lift you into joy. You say what was the thing? Well, it was the purpose of His incarnation, the cross.

The cross was the cause of their sorrow? However, after the sorrow was all over, what was the cross. Paul says, God forbid that I should glory in anything save the cross. That's their joy. And they went on happily praising God, rejoicing all over the book of Acts, preaching the cross. God has a way of turning the sorrow into the joy.

If you lack true joy ask yourself, Am I saved have I been born again. ---gospel

Wayne Barber who is the Senior Pastor of Hoffman Town Church in Albuquerque, NM writes in Pulpit Helps about "joy"; I quote, " ...let's not confuse joy with frivolous delight. Joy is an inward quality that transcends whatever external difficulty we might be dealing with."

James mentions in his epistle to, "Count it all joy when you fall into trials". He is not saying that we are to shout exuberantly at the news that we have just received a demotion at work, or that our neighbor's child has leukemia, or that our husband has just confessed to an adulterous relationship. James does not say "feel joyful" or "put on a happy face" when these sorts of things happen. No, James says that the joy we experience amidst trials is a considered joy, a joy that comes as a result of reflection and meditation on the way of God with us, the way of God in the world.

4. There ought to be in every Christian a deep, settled fullness of the joy of Christ that no circumstance of life can dispel. Don't deny yourself that which is your birthright as a child of God. Jesus did not pray that you would merely be happy or even that you would escape grief. He prayed in John 17 that you would have the same joy that the Father had given Him: a divine joy, a joy that comes from a deep and unwavering relationship with the Father. It is a joy that is grounded firmly in a relationship with God, no change in circumstances could ever shake it.

--- Romans 8:38-39

### III. Beware of the Joy Busters

1. ***Unsatisfied expectations.*** I'm convinced that a spirit of discontentment can rob many of us of this great joy. Do you ever feel like you're just going through some joyless routines in life? If the truth were known some of us are discontent with the way our lives are progressing. Perhaps you don't have everything you want - a bigger house, a nicer car, a better job or even a great Christmas.

Sidney Harris once wrote, "The most miserable people I have known have not been those who suffered from catastrophes -- which they could blame on fate or accident -- but those who had everything they wanted, except the power to enjoy it. Listen to how Paul discovered the secret of being content with what God had given him. Look at **Philippians 4:13**...

2. With such a remarkable salvation experience, how could Christ disciples be any-thing less than joyful? The message is as real today as it was 2,000 years ago. Jesus Christ is the only source of joy we have in this world. It is a gift so many need. The spirit of Christmas is a spirit of joy. God being such a loving Father who gave us the greatest gift ever!

### Conclusion:

It is appropriate that we speak of the cross of Christ for he is God's unspeakable gift. **1 Co. 9:15** Give the perfect gift to someone this year and you will be rejoicing. God's greatest gift came in the fragile body of a baby, but God took the risk because He loves us. Let us be thankful today for such a gift!