

December 15, 2019 -

John 16:16-24 -

"Christmas, a time of Joy"

### Introduction:

I read about a woman who was doing her last-minute Christmas shopping at a crowded mall. She was tired of the crowds, tired of the lines, tired of walking. Her arms were full of bulky packages when an elevator door opened. It was so full the people grudgingly squeezed in together to give her a small space. As the doors closed, she blurted out, "Whoever's responsible for this whole Christmas thing ought to be arrested and strung up!" A few others grunted in agreement. Then, from the back of the elevator, a quiet voice said ~ "Don't worry. They already crucified Him."

It seems that Christmas time catches us off guard, and can be at times chaotic. Sometimes we get so caught up in all of the extras that we don't really enjoy Christmas. We want to enjoy this time of year. We want to enjoy family, friends, and each other. We all want to have moments of pleasure and peace that remind us that this is a time like no other.

Yet, in order to experience this, we end up gritting our teeth and trying to force a sentimental Christmas. We've come to measure Christmas joy by how high the stack of gifts is under the tree. Yet, the forced expectations of joy at this time of year often highlight what is wrong or missing in people's lives. But the "Christmas joy" we expect to see from all people at this time of year is not real joy. Joy is not a surface-level happy; it is deeply seated in one's character. Joy occurs 165 times in 155 verses in the KJV Bible. That is significant let's define.

### 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 yet we can still have joy. True joy may not always manifest itself in smiles and laughter, but rather in grace and assurance. Real joy might be described as knowing that something better exists, and holding onto that which is better. If we remember that Christmas is about God's moment of incarnation as I mentioned.

Joy begins with our understanding that the birth of Christ is the beginning of joy, the completion of it was performed on Calvary for our sins. Joy is a divine dimension of living that is not shackled by circumstances.

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 Father to know His promises.

Folks, our lives do not change nor do our circumstances just 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. 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.

Christmas is to be a time of joy, a joy in celebrating the birth of Christ. 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 it 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 denied 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. 8:1, 2 & 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. ---

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**

This is the kind of joy that Christ is praying will be in you and for Christmas and everytime.

### 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. 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** God wants you to experience this joy that you can only find in Him.