

Luke 2:1-20 (tx: 15-18, 20)

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH JOY

- I. The only cause for it
- II. The true way to do it

INTRODUCTION

Now, I'm sure, you will agree with me, that joy & happiness are always associated with Christmas.

- there is joy in the sound of bells ringing & carols sung & greetings & gifts given.
- there is happiness for merchants with the noise of cash registers, busy shoppers, sales being made.
- there is laughter as family & friends get together, shrieks of delight at the beautiful Christmas decorations displayed, & at presents being unwrapped.

And yet it is true that during this time of year there is also a lot of sadness.

- there is for those who have lost spouses or family members.
- for the sick & shut-ins, for those who are unemployed, for those who are homeless & poor.

Then too much of the joy & happiness experienced by people during this season of year doesn't last very long.

- it only remain until the last Christmas decorations come down, the party is over, the alcohol wears off & people are faced with a terrible hang-over & headache.
 - & then it's back to same old, same old grind of a 8-5 work day & of life itself.
- & it is all because their happiness depend almost entirely on external circumstances & material things.

But now there is way to celebrate **Christmas** so that we possess & experience real joy & happiness,as **Philippians & I Thessalonians 5** command.

- a celebration that spills over into all of life so that we are genuinely joyful regardless the status or situation we are in.
- for note: we can have everlasting joy of receiving God's abundant gifts of victory & peace, hope & life.
 - & we can only when the Christ of Christmas is our Lord & Savior by a real repentance & by a genuine faith in Him.

Well, that's what we also see in **Lk.2's** description of how the shepherds received God's angelic announcement that the Savior had come into the world & then how they celebrated **Christmas**.

- th'fore on this 2nd Sunday, in our advent preparation to properly perceive & observe the true Christmas, we want to look at what shepherds did with it.
- & we consider then: CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH JOY.

- 1st the only cause for it, & 2nd the true way of to do it.

I. THE ONLY CAUSE FOR IT

Now the 1st **truth** our **passage** teaches is **THE ONLY CAUSE** for the shepherds' joyfilled celebration of **Christmas**.

- vs.17,20 tell us it was because of what they had heard & seen.
- & note well: Bible doesn't say they celebrated Christmas with joy because they had heard & seen what our world today is making of this holiday or holy day of Lord.
 - they weren't excited because they had talked with Santa Claus in the Bethlehem Mall.
 - nor were they coming back from doing their Christmas shopping, exhausted & happy to be finished for another year.
 - neither were they joyful because they were filled with holiday spirits found in a bottle or gotten at party where drinking & morals ran freely.
 - nor were they delighted because they had just exchanged gifts & received what they wanted.
- as a matter of fact, Scripture doesn't even say the shepherds had just been to church on Christmas morning so they were filled with happiness.

No, but **Bible** tells us they were celebrating **Christmas** with joy because of something else.

- something they had heard & seen from what God had shown & told them & it knocked their sandals off.
- for it was far greater & more glorious than what society turns this season into every year.

O yes, they had been to a **Christmas** service that night held right on the hills outside of **Bethlehem** where they were watching their sheep.

- & they had heard the Christmas story straight from God's mouth itself through an angel, who suddenly shattered the dark Palestine night with his holy, brilliant, glorious, heavenly appearance.
- & they were surrounded by Lord's mighty glory & power & presence so that these men, who were devote, but yet sinners, were terribly shook & frightened.

But the angel calmed the shepherds. by declaring he had good news of great joy from God for all peoples.

- & then in vs.10-12 the angel tells them, & us too, what Christmas is really all about, & indicated just what God's good & glad news is:
 - that "today in the town of David the Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths & lying in a manger."
- & it all means God was declaring what He had promised down through the OT. had now happened.
 - the promise of the coming Savior had been finally fulfilled.

- Christ, who is the Savior for all peoples, had now come to rescue them from sin & death & restore them back into God's favor & fellowship.
- the only Savior, who is the Lord God Almighty Himself, has been born that night.
 - God had become human so He is now lying as tiny, little baby in a manger in Bethlehem's barn.

And then the shepherds had heard 1st **Christmas** carol ever sung by that huge group of angels filling & brightly lighting the night sky.

- & they confirmed the fact God had now fulfilled His promise of salvation for people.
- & they praised Him that now there was genuine peace & life for those who receive this Savior in faith so that His love rests on them as His own.

Now it was only because of what they had heard & seen from Lord that the shepherd responded as they did in their joyful **Christmas** celebration.

- vs.15-20 indicate they hurried off to Bethlehem to see what had happened where they found Mary & Joseph & baby lying in a manger.
- we see then they had seen & heard the real meaning & message of Christmas.
 - they had been in the very presence of God that night in the stable where they saw Him lying as real human being come to be their Savior & the Savior of the world.
- no wonder then they celebrated Christmas the way they did, because all they had heard & seen was far more wonderful than any Christmas present & parties can ever be!

Now, if the shepherds celebrated **Christmas** the way they did because of what they heard & seen that silent, holy night, then don't we have all the more reason to make our **Christmas** celebration like theirs?

- for, after all, as those in Christ by faith, we too have seen & heard & experience the real meaning of Christmas, & even more so, because we know it in all its fullness.
- with God's Word, Bible, we know more about Christmas than the shepherds ever did.
 - we know & believe that God did more than just become a human being by being conceived through HSpirit & born of the Virgin Mary.
 - we also know He went to Calvary's cross where He suffered & died for our sins.
 - that He arose again from the dead to bring us eternal life with God.
 - that He returned to heaven to govern & guide everything for our saving & glorious good.
 - & that He is coming back again to give us our full & final salvation from sin & death & life everlasting with God in the new world.

And so, because we have also seen & heard & experience these saving joys, not only of **Christmas**, but also of **Good Friday & Easter** too, that should cause us to celebrate **Christmas** the way the shepherds did.

- & make it a real holy day of joyful praise & worship, of honor & glory to God.

II. THE TRUE WAY TO DO

And that brings us to the 2nd truth of our text: **THE TRUE WAY TO DO** our **Christmas** celebration.

- for we also see here in Lk.2 how the shepherds reacted & responded to that 1st Christmas message of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- & notice again: they didn't celebrate it with lots of presents & big parties.
 - instead they celebrated it as it was meant to be celebrated.

For **Bible** tells us after angels had left them & returned to heaven, they said:

- “‘Let's go to Bethlehem & see this thing that has happened, which Lord has told us about.’ So they hurried off & found Mary & Joseph, & the baby, who was lying in a manger.”
- that is to say, they celebrated Christmas in faith, which involves trust & obedience.

For, you see, they took God at His Word & were convinced of the truth of His angelic announcement & of its saving importance for them & others.

- they believed all Lord had said, & welcomed the fact He had become a human being to be the Savior.
 - & they believed they needed that Savior to be saved & live eternally.
- th'fore they were ready to respond to God's saving Word even at the risk of being ridiculed by those who wouldn't believe & obey.

And so in faith & obedience the shepherds high-tailed it as fast as they could go to **Bethlehem**.

- & there they took their place beside the manger.
- & in true repentance & faith they worshiped Mary's baby as their God & Savior from sin.

O, see, that took real faith to do what shepherds did & what **Mary & Joseph, & even the wisemen**, did too.

- they were all asked to believe the impossible.
 - just take God at His Word & do what He said.
- Mary & Joseph were asked to believe in a preposterous pregnancy without a human father.
 - the shepherds were asked to believe that in Bethlehem that very night the almighty God Himself had stepped onto this planet as a real baby to be our Savior.
 - the One promised since the world began.
 - the wisemen were asked to follow a star believing it would lead them to the Savior.
- yet everyone of them believe Christmas' miracle of salvation & ended up at the manger where they knelt down before the child born that day.
 - & they believed in Him as their Savior & worshiped Him as their Lord & King.

And that's what we are all asked to do to make our **Christmas** celebration filled with joy.

- &, if we are going to receive & possess & experience its wonderful salvation life & joy always.

- then too we must believe in Mary's boy & receive Him as our only Savior & Lord.
 - & worship & praise Him as God become 1 of us to save us.

But now note well: the shepherd's glad celebration **Christmas** in faith & obedience, & their worship & praise didn't end at the manger.

- their believing in God's saving Word wasn't just a 1-day activity out of 5week by going to church on Sunday or just a 1-day of year celebration on Christmas day.
- no, for Lk.2 says their Christmas celebration of faith & worship influenced their whole life.
 - all they said & did.
- it did, because we are told they returned to their daily living & work.
 - & on their way there 1st of all “they spread the word concerning what they had been told them” & what they had seen & experienced concerning Christmas & its Christ-child.
 - that is they shared with everyone what they had just witnessed.
 - they told all they met God's good news that the Savior had come.
 - & I can imagine they also told others so they would also receive & possess Christmas' real joy of salvation & eternal life & peace by believing in Him who was born that day.

And what better way is there to celebrate **Christmas** then to share its good news of great joy with all peoples.

- for, if our faith & worship for Lord & Savior are genuine, then too we will leave the manger & go out into the world, far & near.
- & we will be doing all we can to tell the whole wide world that Jesus is the only way out of sin & death into real, wonderful, eternal happiness & peace of living with God now & forever.
 - & that it comes only by faith in the Savior Christ Jesus, who was born on Christmas for them.

Then too **Scripture** says: “The shepherd returned, glorifying & praising God for all the things they had heard & seen, which were just as they had been told.”

- that means, as they reflected on the fact they had found everything to be exactly as Lord had told them, they went back to their daily living & work with renewed faith & strength in Him.
- th'fore they went back & believed & loved & lived Lord everyday as they lived out their faith in Him in their work & play to give thanks to Him for Christmas & for Christ, their Savior.

And no doubt they could then rejoice always, no matter what happened, for their joy wasn't based on human efforts or feelings or what was going on around them in the events of history & life.

- but it was found & based on God & what He did on Christmas for their salvation.

- & such a life & joy, based only on that, will endure through life's struggles, through death & on into eternity.

CONCLUSION

Well, that's the only way we too must celebrate **Christmas** with joy to experience its genuine, everlasting salvation & life.

- not only must we believe God's Word that Christ, the Savior & Lord, has come to save us.
- not only must we go & worship & praise Him during this time of year for what God has done to save us.

But we must also welcome & receive with joy the **Christmas-Child** into every part of our lives.

- we must live our faith in Him every day with lives of obedience love & loyalty as we make Him Lord of our homes, our schools, our work & leisure times & all rest.
- & we must show that our faith & love to Him by lovingly & joyfully serving others in words & deeds that reveal Him & bring honor to His name.

Let us then do as song puts it:

- “Come to manger. Come & see the Lord of all. The tiny baby, Jesus is His name.
Can He really be the Lord? O come to manger. Come see Christ the Savior
Come to manger. Come & see the Lord of all. No guards are posted at manger.
His palace home is just a stall. No royal guests are there to see the tiny King: to see the Savior of us all.
Come, come, come to manger. Come & see the Lord of all.”

Only then will we have a real, merry, joy filled **Christmas** celebration today & always.

- for then, in Christ, the Savior, will we have a real, rich, unending life now & forever.
- & despite the hurts & headaches, the loss & loneliness, handicaps & heart-aches we experience in this life, we will still be able to be always joyfuf.

For, as **Someone** writes:

- “The heart of Christmas is love—the love Jesus gives us to share with others.
The love that makes each of us special to Him.

The heart of Christmas is joy—the joy received through His grace-- expectant joy that carries us into a new year.

The heart of Christmas is peace--peace that comes from knowing Jesus.

Assurance that comes from placing our lives in His hands.”

AMEN