

**Sermon Notes: Great Joy - Luke 2:1-20**  
**Brush Hill Church - 12/19/21**

Opening Question

- Would you describe yourself as a person of joy? Or do you tend to be more jaded, cynical, and see what's broken in the world more than what's beautiful?

The Search for Joy:

- A 2005 paper from researchers from University of Columbia and from University of California found that an **estimated 50% of a person's happiness can be determined by genetic factors.**<sup>1</sup>
- Unfortunately, unless you have the means to change your circumstances or hit the genetic lottery, you are going to find hardship, and reasons to not be joyful.

The Circumstances of the First Christmas:

- 1) **Census** - An occupying political leader in a palace far away makes a decree that forces a poor, pregnant, teen girl and her husband to make a tough trip on foot.
- 2) **No Room in the Inn** - Likely due to the census, the young couple had no place to stay after arriving in Bethlehem.
- 3) **Birth in the barn** - Did Mary, knowing who the baby was supposed to be, feel as if she was letting God down by having the Savior in a cave or barn?

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<sup>1</sup> "Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change"  
<http://sonjalyubomirsky.com/wp-content/themes/sonjalyubomirsky/papers/LSS2005.pdf>

- 4) **Smelly Shepherds** - Later on a group of stranger shepherds likely smelling of woodsmoke, sweat, and sheep come in wanting to see the child.

Why Don't We Experience More Joy?

- 1) Looking in the wrong places of wealth, success or other fleeting things.
- 2) The reality of suffering in life.
- 3) An inability to develop an intentional way of life that allows us to cultivate joy.

Responding in Christ:

- 1) **For Christ followers true joy is ultimately born of our salvation.** Salvation is God coming into the mess of our lives and changing our reality:
  - From estranged from God and alone, into relationship. (Rom. 5:10-11)
  - From unsure of who we are, into a daughter or son of God. (Gal. 4:4-7)
  - From an unclear future, to one of new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17)
  - From a victim of sin, to an overcomer in Christ. (John 16:33)
  - Our rescue from sin and its effects is **both** something Christ won for us through his life, death, and resurrection, and something that keeps happening as we walk and grow into maturity as disciples of Jesus.
- 2) **Joy is born, not out of an absence of suffering, but as a present reality together in the midst of**

***suffering as place our hope in the second Advent or coming of Christ.***

- We don't have easy answers, we don't gloss over pain and suffering, rather in the triumphant faith of Jesus we have hope and work toward the reality we know will be one day.
  - Jesus experienced the suffering of death before experiencing the glory of resurrection.
  - Joy's relationship to suffering: God often uses suffering to help us grow in joy.
    - God doesn't cause evil, but God is always seeking to bring good out of evil and our suffering. (Gen. 50:20)
    - Suffering has a way of removing all the extra things we think we need to make us happy.
- **3) Joy is born out of an intentional way of life modeled after Jesus. *Philippians 4:4-9***
    - 1) Let us rejoice (v4) - Joy comes from rejoicing.
      - Hold parties, sing, dance, eat with friends, put up decorations, attend funerals, etc.
      - *How are you publically celebrating?*
    - 2) Let us be near to God (v5) - Joy comes from being near to God.
      - *What are your daily habits of being near to God?*

- 3) Let us practice gratitude (v6) - Joy comes from gratitude.
  - Let go of the life you wish you had, and embrace the life you do have as a gift from our Creator.
  - Being in relationship with the poor and vulnerable.
  - *How do you literally practice thanksgiving?*
- 4) Let us discipline our minds (v8) - Joy comes from disciplining your mind..
  - We can't control all our thoughts, but we can choose to bring our thoughts back to what's noble and excellent.
  - "It's okay to walk through the valley just don't pitch a tent."
  - *How are you disciplining your mind?*
- 5) Let us remain persistent (v9) - Joy comes from persistent practice.
  - Recognize that a renewing life with Jesus takes time and consistency to grow.
  - *How will you remain encouraged toward the long-run?*