

The Pleasure of God in Christmas – *Luke 2:9-11*

Introduction – How was your Christmas? Or how is your Christmas going (those of you who are celebrating the 12 days)? No matter how sweet your Christmas, how robust your celebrating, how deeply meaningful and spiritual your meditations on the Incarnation, how many games and gifts, how much feasting and festivities, how many carols and cards and carbs, you did not come close to experiencing the pleasure over the story of Christmas that God had and has. As we commune with our Lord, would it not be proper to ask Him, “*how was Your Christmas?*” What did the Father celebrate that first Christmas? Is there an ongoing celebration of the Incarnation in heaven?

The Text: “*And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’*”

The Angel-Messenger – This was the word of an angel, glorious and terrifying beings to behold. The word “*angelos*” also and simply means “*messenger*” and so John the Baptist was an angel (Mark 1:2) and pastors are probably those who are being referred to as the angels of the seven churches in Revelation. These are the messengers of the Lord. This angel of the Lord, therefore, brought a message from the Lord. The message revealed the Lord’s view of the birth of the Messiah, His Son.

Terrifying Joy – Seeing the angel brought great fear, but the shepherds are told not to fear for they are to be overwhelmed instead with great joy (v10, 20). What we learn in the gospels is not simply that we received this gift of a little boy, but a Savior, and His kingdom along with Him (Luke 12:32). This is the Father’s good pleasure.

“*I evangelize to you great joy*” – is a more literal translation of “*I bring you tidings of great joy.*” What is about to be said is the Gospel, the Good News. And its declaration is not simply to make you happy; it is to change you forever from the inside out. It is the great joy of God being placed in you in everlasting communion with Him. And when a sinner comes to Christ, the angels in heaven find themselves in the presence of great joy (Luke 15:10).

God’s Good Pleasure – Come and behold the pleasure of God. He predestined this whole event, choosing us in Him before the foundation of the world, “*according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His gracious glory*” (Eph 1:4-6).

The Son’s Pleasure – Jesus uses the same word as the angel, “*evangelize*” as He quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4, and then He says that these words are fulfilled in their hearing (Luke 4:21). If we turn and look at the entire prophecy of Isaiah 61, we find that those who once had shame now have “*double honor*” and “*everlasting joy shall be theirs*” (Isaiah 61:7). Then the speaker (who is Christ) says that He will greatly rejoice in the LORD...(61:10-11).

The Good News of Rejoicing (Luke 2:10-11) – Consider the Good News here. This baby was born in the city of David. God had promised that from this little town the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting, would come forth (Mic 5:2). It is amazing to think that this was done through God’s perfect providence, having Caesar Augustus, the king of kings of the largest empire, raise the taxes on his kingdom and call for a census (Luke 2:1-2, Prov 21:1). In this city of David, a Son of David is born, One to Whom was promised an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-13, 16, Luke 1:30-33). He will be the promised Savior (Jesus’ name means “*Yahweh Saves*”). He is “*Christ*,” that is “*the anointed One*” who was promised, and He is the Lord (Emmanuel, God with us). We can see from the use of the word “*Lord*” throughout these chapters in Luke that this is referring to Christ’s full divinity. Paul would say that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord (Yahweh in the Hebrew passage he is quoting) shall be saved (Rom 10:13).

You may know all of this but are you rejoicing in all of this? Are you pondering all of this as Mary did in her heart? Because God predestined this, pondered it over and over through the prophets, celebrated it as it happened, and has been declaring it with great joy through His messengers ever since. And He does so, knowing better than we do, all the trials that were still before Jesus, and all of the trials that would befall His people.

The Pleasure of God in His Plan (Isaiah 53:10-12) – God knew exactly where this little child, His Son, was going to end up: impaled on a Cross. But God did not shed a tear from heaven when Jesus died on the cross. “*It pleased the LORD to bruise Him...and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand*” (also Heb 12:2). Why? Because the labor of the Servant on the cross satisfied the wrath of God and provided the only Way of reconciliation for man (John 1:29, 1 John 2:1-2). The oppression of the cross was the will of God and accomplished the will of God (Acts 4:27-28). In His resurrection, Jesus declares the justification of His people and is given the nations (v12, Psalm 2:8).

Our Fierce Joy in the Midst of Grievous Trials (1 Pet 1:6-9) – We are able and commanded to “*greatly rejoice*” while grieved with various trials (v6, Phil 4:4, James 1). This is because your faith is being tested by the fire of those afflictions to a greater glory (v7). If you were told that your gold was being made more pure and valuable, would you want to stop the fire? As your faith is well tested, you are refined in order to believe even more what you cannot yet see (v8), and that leads to rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory. “*Faith is the realization of things hoped for, the confidence of things not seen*” (Heb 11:1, personal translation).

You cannot yet see what it is that the Father is taking such pleasure in (1 Cor 2:9). The story of the Incarnation, along with the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Son, these are but the pillars of what His pleasure is built upon, the foundation of all that He has for His Son and those who are in His Son.

Dave Hatcher – December 26, 2021