

Sunday Leftovers

Sermon Title: “Vintage Christmas – Christmas Traditions”

What’s this message about – Christmas can be an enormously challenging time of year. For all those who struggle to create the perfect Christmas, the hard work and time that goes into the preparations can diminish our being able to personally experience the joy this season can bring. Even if we come close, there is still that ultimate letdown after the gifts are opened, the meals are shared and the family returns to their everyday life. Maybe the real goal is not finding the perfect gift or creating the perfect environment. Maybe the real objective of Christmas is in finding that lasting joy that the key players in the original story experienced. Why was Mary joyful when she was told that she was chosen to bear and raise the Son of God? Why would the shepherds leave their sheep and joyously proclaim the birth of the savior to all who would listen?

According to the Gospel accounts in Luke and Matthew, joy and the birth of the Savior go hand-in-hand. The joy that Mary, Elizabeth, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna felt during that first Christmas was lasting and life changing. The birth of Christ did not eliminate their problems or do away with their pain, it gave them the hope that they needed. Their joy transcended their everyday struggles because this baby did not represent a distant uncaring deity, this Christ-child represented “God with us.” The memory of this story of God stepping into our lives became a constant reminder that God cares about me personally and that He has, does and always will have my back. That type of joy is still available to us, today.

Questions for discussion:

- *What do you think was the main point of Matt’s message?*
- *How would you define joy? Is it different from happiness?*
- *Why do you think the original Christmas story brought such joy to Mary, Elizabeth, the shepherds, etc.?*
- *What are some traditions you can create/re-emphasize this year that will help others understand the meaning and find the joy of Christmas?*

Do something about it: Take time to think about the traditions you employ to celebrate Christmas? Do any of them help tell the story of the birth of Christ? Do any of them illustrate the hope and joy this season should bring? If not, consider creating some new traditions that communicate the true meaning of the season.

Digging deeper: Luke 1:13,14; 39-56; 2:9-11; 25-35; Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11; Romans 14:17; 15:13; Galatians 5:22; Hebrews 12:1-2; 1 John 1:3-5;

