

Embracing Joy

The Point: We can experience great joy because Jesus saved

Passages: Psalm 95: 1-3 and Luke 2: 4-14

The setting: Psalm 95 may suggest that worshipers cited this psalm as they walked to and entered the temple. They know that "the rock of their salvation" was the Lord. That salvation was fulfilled when Jesus came. Luke recorded Christ's birth and the announcement to the shepherds (Luke 2: 4-14), who witnessed the angel's joyous praise.

Psalm 95: 1- 3

Joy is possible because God is our salvation. Come, a command to the people, to worship the Lord. Shout joyfully because of God's saving acts (Lev. 9:24).

The rock of our salvation makes us think of God as immovable. A great God, He is almighty, and all knowing. Nothing is beyond His knowledge and power. A great King above all gods, no other god comes close to the One true sovereign Lord of the universe.

Lasting truths for Psalm 95: 1-3

How wonderful that we are invited to come before God to worship Him.
We worship God through joyous praise and earnest thanksgiving.
The Lord is worthy because He is the unparalleled, unmatched, sovereign God.

Luke 2: 4-7

The Roman government took a census to establish official lists used for taxing the population. The Jews were required to return to their ancestral home, a Jewish custom, to register. While Joseph and Mary were there, they fulfilled the divine King's plan for His Son's birth to occur in Bethlehem, a fact foretold by the prophet Micah eight hundred years earlier (Micah 5:2).

Lasting truths Luke 2: 4-7

The circumstances of the birth of Jesus were directed by God, using the events of human history to accomplish His Holy purpose.
We stand amazed that the birth of Jesus, God's Son, our Savior, took place in such humble surroundings.
God often works in unusual ways, which in themselves become a testimony of His greatness.

Luke 2: 8-14

Shepherding at the time of Jesus's birth was deemed a dishonest business. They faced accusations of tending sheep on land they had no right to use. Public opinion considered shepherds social outcasts. They were regarded as unclean according to the law's standards. God chose these humble shepherds as the first ones to receive the good news of His Son's birth.

The angels (messengers) appeared, for God had given them the task of announcing and celebrating the birth of His Son. The shepherds were overcome by fear, but the Angel described that good news in two ways. It was news of great joy. The joyous news of the gospel that could be experienced by all people, even society's outcasts.

People cannot produce peace on earth merely by showing good will to one another. We cannot be genuinely at peace with each other until we are at peace with God. We become recipients of His good pleasure or favor when we place our faith in His Son.

The good news of the gospel brings joy. Joy does not center in something we earn or in material things we possess. It involves an inward sense of contentment and comfort that comes from a right relationship with God regardless of our circumstances. Joy is God's gift you receive by entering a personal relationship with Christ by faith.

Lasting truths Luke 2: 8-14

No one is outside the scope of God's love. He desires that all know the joyous message of salvation.

Knowing that Jesus is savior, messiah, and Lord gives us cause to rejoice. True peace is a gift of God, not a result of human effort.

Prayer

Most gracious heavenly Father, thank you for the good news of why Jesus came to earth. May we share this with your people so they may receive your gift of salvation and spend eternity in heaven. In Jesus name I pray.
Amen

Al West