

Gifts Of Christmas Sermon Series | Session 3: The Gift Of Joy

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This series download also includes discussion questions that can be used to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

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A Prayer Before You Prepare | Heavenly Father, all glory, honor, and praise belongs to You alone! You are worthy of all of my adoration. You alone formed the world and called what you created "good." Thank you for being who you are. Thank you for creating me in Your likeness. Thank you for your abundant mercy and grace. Every good gift, including your Word, is a gift to me. Today, I want to worship you! Let my life be for you and your glory. Lord, please give me your wisdom and insight now as I approach your Word. Help me to discern the truth of this text. Help me not to rely on my own understanding. Remove my ego, wants, and selfish desires. Guide and direct me as I prepare to teach the truth of your holy scriptures to the students whom you love and have placed within my care for such a time as this. May the words I speak be those you want to be spoken, may the words they hear be those you want to be heard, and may Your name be glorified through it all. Amen!

Series Snapshot | *Gifts Of Christmas* is a four-session series that will help your students understand the gifts God gives us through the incarnation of Christ that we celebrate at Christmas: hope, peace, joy, and love.

Series Overview | We live in a world that is filled with hopelessness. A place where peace is often fleeting, war is common, and conflict is constantly lurking around the corner. We live in a world where joy is lost in the hustle and bustle of life. Our world is one where love can feel empty. This is the world in which God sent His Son Jesus to come and save us from sin—to give mankind hope, peace, joy, and love. *Gifts Of Christmas* will remind us that because of the greatest Gift of all, we can have life and know how to share His hope, peace, joy, and love with the world. Each of these four sessions of this series will represent one of the traditional advent themes found in the story of Christ’s birth, life, death, and resurrection.

- **Session 1 – The Gift of Hope** (Genesis 3:8-15, Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:25-32, Luke 2:36-38, Romans 5:1-5, Titus 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 15:19-20, Matthew 28: 19-20, 1 Peter 3:14-15) | In the beginning, when Adam and Eve first sinned, all seemed hopeless because of the consequences of sin. But God foretold of a hope that was coming to save the world. This hope was born thousands of years later in Christ’s birth. Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we too can have hope when all things seem lost.
- **Session 2 – The Gift of Peace** (Genesis 3:1-6, Luke 2:8-14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 59:2, Romans 1:18, Romans 5:1, 8-10, Ephesians 2:14, Romans 12:18) | One of the consequences of sin is that it separates us from God. Our flesh is at war with God, and there is no peace. Throughout history, humankind has strived for true peace. But this peace is not a political peace but a peace that God gives us in the reconciliation that Jesus makes possible through His death and resurrection.
- **Session 3 – The Gift of Joy** (Luke 2:8-20, John 9:1-24) After Jesus’ birth, Angels appeared to shepherds and told them of the birth of Christ. After the shepherds found Jesus, they hurried to tell the town about the Messiah who had come. Their joy could not be contained, for the Savior had come.
- **Session 4 – The Gift of Love** (1 John 4:7-12) | This is love: that God sent Jesus to live, love, die, and rise from the dead to save us. And we show this by loving one another. God’s love has been poured out to all through Jesus. As we look to Him, that love transfers to how we are to love others.

Gifts Of Christmas Series | Session 3

Large Group Teaching Summary | After Jesus is born, Angels appear to a group of shepherds and tell them of the birth of Christ. After they find Jesus, the shepherds hurry about and tell the town about the Messiah who has come. Their joy could not be contained, for the Savior has come.

Key Takeaway | Our joy found in Christ cannot be contained but must be shared.

Scripture Focus | Luke 2:8-20, John 9:1-24

What You May Need | *Optional Illustration: Joy* (Movie Clip). *Optional Illustration: Great Joy* (Personal Story), *Optional Illustration: Great Joy In Seeing Others* (Personal Story), *Optional Illustration: Huge Weight* (Personal Story), *Optional Illustration: Knowing Christ* (Personal Story).

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to session three of our series, *Gifts Of Christmas*! Over these last few times together, we've been unwrapping four great gifts that are a part of the Christmas story and Advent.
- B. Every year, Christians across the world celebrate the Advent of Christ.
 - 1. Advent is a word that comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming" or "arrival."
 - 2. In the Christian church, Advent refers to a four-week season of remembering and preparation leading up to Christmas, where we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Earth and His expected return.
 - 3. Advent begins on the Sunday closest to November 30th and ends on December 24th.
 - 4. Each week of Advent focuses on a different theme— hope, peace, joy, and love.
- C. The first gift we unwrapped together was the GIFT OF HOPE.
 - 1. We acknowledge that we live in a world where hope is in short supply. It can seem like everywhere we turn, there is a reason to be defeated or feel hopeless. The truth of the Gospel is that there is always hope.
 - 2. We explored some passages of Scripture to learn how hope sparked, how hope arrived in Jesus, how we can have hope, how hope grows in us, and how we are to respond to hope right now.
 - 3. We closed the first session, realizing that JESUS GIVES US THE GIFT OF ULTIMATE HOPE. He is the hope of the world and the greatest gift of all.
- D. In our second session, we unwrapped GIFT OF PEACE.
 - 1. We talked about how, throughout history, humankind has strived for true peace. And how this peace is not a political peace but a peace that God gives us because of the reconciliation that Jesus makes possible through his death and resurrection.
 - 2. Through Scripture we looked back to see how the war began, learned that our flesh is at war with God, that God hates sin, and that our sin separates us from God.
 - 3. But the most important thing we discovered is that WHERE THERE IS NO PEACE, GOD BECAME PEACE FOR US SO THAT WE CAN HAVE PEACE WITH HIM AND WITH OTHERS.
- E. In this third session, we are continuing unwrapping the *Gifts of Christmas* as we talk about the gift of joy.
- F. What do you think of when you first hear the word, Joy?
 - 1. Ask a few students to give 1-3 word answers.

- G. When I think of the word joy, I think of a few things:
1. **Optional Illustration: Joy**
 - a) **NOTE: Prepare to show a video clip of a character that is overly joyful. I like to use a clip of Elf meeting "Santa" in the department store.**
- H. What about the joy of opening up a gift on Christmas?
1. **Optional Illustration: Great Joy**
 - a) **NOTE: Share a story of you experiencing pure joy, maybe an engagement story, the birth of a child, etc.**
- I. Have you ever watched the joy on young children's faces? The pure joy on their face is priceless when they get gifts or ride a coaster for the first time. But what about you? What has brought you the most joy? Have you shared that joy with others?

II. Tension

- A. Sometimes joy is hard to find in all the hustle and bustle of the season. But when we find real joy, it makes all the difference in the world. You see, joy is not something that is complicated or something to think hard about. Rather, joy is a choice and response. Because of Jesus, there are many reasons for us to have Joy in our lives.
- B. What is Joy according to the dictionary? It's a noun, and it means:
1. The emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying; keen pleasure; elation.
 2. A source or cause of keen pleasure or delight; something or someone greatly valued or appreciated.
 3. The expression or display of glad feeling; festive gaiety.
 4. A state of happiness or felicity.
- C. Let's open up Scripture together and see what God's Word has to say about what joy is and what we are supposed to do with it.

III. Scripture

- A. JOY AND WORSHIP
1. Before we jump in, let's get a little background on who and what we are about to read.
 - a) Luke was a doctor, a Gentile (non-Jewish) Christian, and a companion of Paul.
 - b) The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
 - c) Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

2. READ LUKE 2:8-20.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

- a) This passage takes place the same night that Jesus was born. The shepherds were out watching their sheep when the angels appeared to them. They immediately went and found the baby Jesus.
 - b) In verses 17-30, the shepherds respond to meeting the Messiah, which means promised one. Two of their responses were that they left glorifying and praising God.
 - c) They left with joy. As they were returning to the sheep, they could not stop talking and singing about all they had just experienced. They left praising God. One of the natural responses to meeting Jesus is to worship.
 - d) Why was this such a big thing? Since the creation of the world and sin entering it, there has been a prophecy about a coming Messiah that would save the world. And now this Messiah was here!
3. Have you had a friend or relative whom you have not seen in a while come to your house? What was it like waiting on them? Was it joyful when you did see them?
- a) **Optional Illustration: Joy In Seeing Others**
 1. **NOTE: Share a time when you got excited to see someone whom you had not seen in a while. This shows why the shepherds were so excited to meet the Messiah.**
4. Why should we be excited about Jesus? If you remember from session two, we talked about how sin separated us from God. And that this sin made us enemies with God.
- a) The Old Testament goes further and describes the burden of sin, and in the New Testament the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23).
 - b) When we see what our sin does to us and the weight of that guilt on us, we can then see a bigger picture of what happens when all our sin is forgiven.

5. Jesus, after living a perfect life, died on the Cross, taking your sins and mine. He was then buried and rose again on the third day, conquering sin and death. Making a way for us to be in restored relationship with God forever.
6. That is a HUGE weight off our shoulders.
 - a) **Optional Illustration: Huge Weight**
 1. **NOTE: Share a time when you experienced having a huge weight that you were carrying and what it felt like when it came off. Maybe have a backpack with a lot of heavy books in it.**
7. So now that we have met Christ, what is our response?

B. JOY TO THE WORLD

1. After the shepherds left Jesus, their response was to share this joy with everyone whom they came in contact with. In John chapter 9 we see a similar story.

2. READ JOHN 9:1-24.

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was

born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus[b] to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

- a) Jesus healed a man who was blind from birth but was not able to see. It is clear that he is excited about this miracle that had taken place. In verse 25, the blind man was being asked a bunch of questions by the pharisees. And when he was asked who healed him, he said he did not know but what he does know is that he “*was blind but now I can see.*” And this is exactly what Jesus does for us.

b) **Optional Illustration: Knowing Christ**

1. NOTE: Share your story of how you came to Christ.

3. In chapter 5 of John, we can read about another man that was healed from his sickness. Once healed, his response was to go around sharing what had been done.
4. What we see through all of these stories is that our response to getting joy from Jesus saving us from our sin, is to share that joy with others.
5. JOY IS NOT MEANT TO BE KEPT IN ISOLATION BUT TO BE SHARED WITH THE WORLD.
6. People’s response to salvation is to immediately start telling others about what Jesus has done for us. And we should do the same!

IV. Application

A. HOW CAN WE SHARE OUR JOY THAT IS FOUND IN JESUS?

1. How about asking one of your friends what the word “joy” means to them? Then, follow that up by asking them what gives them joy? And when they ask you, you can share with them about some things that give you joy. But share the greatest joy that you have which is found in the salvation that Christ brings.
2. You can also pray for a friend to come to know Christ as their Savior. Y
3. You can invite a friend to church. Better yet, pray for an opportunity to share what Christ has done for you and share that with a friend.

V. Gospel

- A. We said in our first session that you can’t share about a hope in Jesus that you, yourself, don’t have. This is also true with joy. You can’t share the joy of knowing Jesus and being set free from the burden of sin if you’ve never been set free yourself.

- B. In fact, you may be sitting here, hearing all of this for the first time and wondering what this joy in Jesus is all about. You may have never heard of sin, God's love, or being saved through Jesus. You may even be asking, "Who even is Jesus?!" Let me fill you in.
- C. Every person on this earth shares the same great need. We all need a Savior in our lives, and His name is Jesus.
- D. God's design, when He created us and our world, was absolutely perfect. His plan was perfect. But, as we talked about in this series when we looked at Genesis, this thing called sin (essentially anything you think, say, or do that displeases God or goes against His commands) entered our world and created an impassable gap between Him and us. Like Adam and Eve, we have all sinned. And because of that sin, we are spiritually separated from God. God can't be anywhere near sin. And since God is the only source of true life, spiritual separation from Him means we're spiritually dead.
- E. But God is a good God. And He didn't want us to be left alone, spiritually separated from Him. So, in His infinite grace and mercy, God the Father sent us a Savior named Jesus, God the Son. Jesus came to earth, lived a sinless life, and died a sacrificial death on our behalf to free us from the burden of sin. But the story doesn't end there! Jesus then rose again from the grave, conquering sin and death itself, and gave us access to a full life with God.
- F. We have the hope of no longer having a spiritual separation between us and God. All we have to do is confess that Jesus is God's promised Savior, acknowledge our need for Him, and repent of (turn away from/ask forgiveness for) the sin in our lives that separates us from God. It's by God's grace through our faith that we are forgiven of our sins and given eternal life in relationship with God. Then, we choose to live our lives according to God's will and tell others about Him.
- G. If you've never made that decision for your own life, I encourage you to do it right now.

VI. Conclusion

- A. JESUS GIVES US TRUE JOY THROUGH THE SALVATION THAT HE ALONE CAN GIVE.
- B. If you are a follower of Jesus, this joy that you have experienced in and through Jesus is to be shared with others. Why are we silent or shy about this? Like the shepherds or the blind man who was healed, we should be telling everyone about the joy of the world who is Jesus.
- C. Will you give someone the gift of Joy this Christmas by telling them about the true joy of the world?

***The Gift of Christmas* Sermon Series Outline | Session 3: The Gift Of Joy**
