

Merry Christmas
Luke 1:26-38, 46-55
“Joy To The World”

Introduction

Great peace have they which love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.

Psalm 119:165 (KJV)

It seems everywhere we go this time of year we are greeted with the words “Have a Merry Christmas!” Or for those who are obsessed with the politically correct, “Happy Holidays.” You would think with all these wishes of merriment that people would be happy. But if you look closely, they’re not. In fact, it seems like the prevailing emotion going around these days is anger. Everyone seems upset about something or another, whether its politics, the rising prices of goods and services, traffic, the weather, or just being angry for angry’s sake. I just don’t see a lot of joy going round these days. How about you?

I don’t remember it always being like this. Maybe I was just much more naive in my younger days, but it seems to me that I can recall a time when folks weren’t so upset over pretty much everything. Can I get a witness? So what has changed in our society that has caused it to become so confrontational and seemingly irreconcilable? Well, first of all, I believe it is because this world doesn’t really know what true happiness is, and yet, it longs desperately to find it. And second, it has no clue as to where to look for it. So we can see how this would be a source of utter frustration. And perpetual hopelessness will eventually drive even the most patient among us to fits of rage.

Welcome to America 2022. I believe that the pandemic was the proverbial “straw that broke the camel’s back” in this country. Whatever self-control the masses had has now been replaced with a survival of the fittest mentality. Simply put, now it seems we have devolved into an “everyone for himself” mindset. People seem to think that if they can just “have it their way”, then they will be happy. But sadly, the more they get what they want, the angrier they seem to become.

Just this past week, the United States Senate passed legislation that “codified” same sex marriage. We have been told for decades now that this is fair and just. Forget what *The Bible* says, let’s just give folks what they want so they will be happy. Only they aren’t happy. Has anyone noticed? For here is the genuine truth my friends; this world has a Creator, and if we aren’t doing things according to His will, then sorrow will ensue. You cannot be “merry” when you are out of God’s will. Period.

Now, I know that some think this is a backward and narrow minded way of thinking. But if those folks have all the answers, then why are they so miserable all the time? It seems to me that the more the godless of our society get what they want, the more inconsolable they become. Why is that? Well, the answer to this question can only be found in a place where they refuse to look... *The Bible*.

But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don’t boast and deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace. **James 3:14-18**

Now, I know what you must be thinking, “This is the weirdest Christmas sermon I’ve ever heard.” But hear me out. If you truly wish to be happy, if you would really like to have a “Merry Christmas”, then I am here to share with you the secret to having it. The secret to happiness comes from a humble submission to The Word of God. This is the **wisdom that comes from above**, to which James was referring in the passage we just read. And today, I am going to show you a person in Scripture, who exemplifies this joyous way of living. She is an example of pure humility and praise, simply because she took God at His Word and submitted herself to His will completely. She was only a teenager at the time, but she shows more spiritual maturity than most Christians I know. Her name was Mary, and we could all learn a lot from her example.

The Submission (vs. 26-38)

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. Then the angel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end."

Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?"

The angel replied to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. And consider your relative Elizabeth — even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. For nothing will be impossible with God."

"See, I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it happen to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Now, we've all heard this story a thousand times. But I wonder if we spend too much time on its splendor and not the sacrifice. Do you think that Mary was so caught up in the awe of the angelic visitor that she forgot what was being commanded of her? Yes, she was chosen to be the mother of The Son of God, and yes, what an incredible honor that was for her. But she was also about to become an unwed teenage mother in a small town full of extremely, religious conservatives! How do you suppose they would react to the news? For you see, the Angel Gabriel did not go door to door in Nazareth to explain the circumstances to all who lived there. God didn't make sure that everyone was in the know when it came to Mary's condition. Maybe a few of them would believe her testimony, but most would not. She was being chosen by God to become a blessing, as well as... an outcast!

If Mary lived in this day and age, I have no doubt that the "wise counselors" at Planned Parenthood would tell her that she should have an abortion. I can just hear them telling this sweet innocent teenager, that she had her whole life ahead of her, and that she needed to think of herself at a time like this! The hardship of raising this child in this atmosphere would be too great. The best and most convenient course of action would be to rid herself of this burden. Thank God, that Mary's decision making was based on the wisdom from above and not of this world, or we would all be forever lost in our sin.

Mary, in her faith, did not question Gabriel *that* the things he had told her would happen, but she did question *how* they would happen. She knew enough to know that virgins don't conceive, so she was curious as to the details. Gabriel patiently explained to her that the pregnancy would be miraculous in nature and that God could do what seemed impossible to mankind. And Mary accepted this explanation without question.

But here is the part that I want you to see this morning. I promised you that I was about to explain how you can have genuine joy in this life, no matter the hardship. And here is the way. Listen to Mary's response to all that Gabriel had told her.

"See, I am The LORD'S servant. "May it happen to me as you have said."

Two short sentences that speak volumes! First, she proclaims that she is a servant of God. The word she uses is the feminine version of a bond-slave. Mary is humbling herself completely. She is The LORD'S personal property, relinquishing all rights and privileges to Him, and Him alone. There is no give and take on her part, no "what's in this for me" attitude. She is pledging herself fully to God. And that, my friends, is what true Christianity does. You don't get to call Jesus LORD, and then tell Him what you will and will not do. Mary submitted herself fully to God.

Now, for the second part, which goes along with the first. She declared **"May it happen to me as you have said."** You cannot submit to God, without submitting to The Word of God! He's not your LORD, if you think you can choose to ignore His commands. We see it all the time, self-described Christians setting aside the commandments of Scripture, as they deem necessary. Denominations all over the world are at civil war within themselves over the dislike of certain doctrines. People who claim to be Christians are taking it upon themselves to decide which parts of God's Word they agree with and which parts they do not. To their evil thinking, they can modify the commandments of Scripture in a way that fits better within their own selfish schemes of how things should be. The level of arrogance possessed by someone who is convinced that they know better than the Creator Himself is *astounding*!

Just because someone claims to be religious doesn't mean that they belong to Christ. Lots of folks out there have convictions. Some have very strong convictions. But if your convictions do not align themselves with The Scriptures, then as sincere as they may be, your convictions are sincerely wrong! To submit to God is to submit to His Word. When I have a problem with God's Word, it is I who have a problem, not The WORD.

We must never forget that the people who executed Christ were very religious. They just didn't like what He had to say. His Word didn't fit their plans. His Word was inconvenient for them. Therefore, they rejected The Word and murdered The Son of God. These same kind of people are prevalent in our society today, so called "Christians" that think *The Bible* needs an upgrade! They think that God needs to change with the times. But God **never** changes. And when you try and rearrange His Word to your liking, all you are doing is creating a god in your own image. Its called idolatry, and I think we have more of it in this world today than there has ever been in history, my friends.

Do you want to truly be happy? Then submit yourself to God and His Word. He is the Creator, and His Word is the owners manual. My dad is gone on to be with The LORD, but when I was little, he did Christmas better than anyone I know. He told me once that he had stayed up all night trying to put together a toy for us boys. The problem was... being a typical "guy"... he wasn't reading the directions. After several failed attempts at construction, he begrudgingly opened the discarded folded paper from the box and began to read. The first sentence of the instruction packet made him laugh out loud. It said, "Now try it our way." And therein lies the truth to happiness in The LORD my friends. If you want to be truly happy, then you must live according to God's instructions. There must be a time when you come to realize that your way is not the best way. Let your prayer to God be, **"Let it happen as YOU have said."**

The Source (vs. 46-55)

And Mary said:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, because He has looked with favor on the humble condition of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and His name is holy. His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear Him. He has done a mighty deed with His arm; He has scattered the proud because of the thoughts of their hearts; He has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he spoke to our ancestors.

Now don't miss this... When you fully submit yourself to the truth of God's Word, the source of your joy is God Himself! He becomes your never-ending supply of joy. If you have ever seen someone caught up in genuine worship (as opposed to that which is shallow and superficial), you will see someone who's source of joy is Jesus. Just look at how Mary gives praise to God, when her faith is confirmed by her visit with Elizabeth. She lists all the things that God has done for her, even in the midst of what is destined to be a difficult situation. God has given her lasting joy.

She begins by saying that her soul and spirit magnifies God and rejoices in her Savior. (Side note: if Mary was as sinless as Catholicism teaches, she wouldn't have needed a Savior.) Now, let's make sure we comprehend what she is saying here. She has already offered up her body to do God's will when she proclaimed, **"Let it be unto me as you have said."** And now she is offering up her all to God as His humble servant. She is giving herself to Him; Body, Soul, and Spirit. And He is now her complete source of joy. She is trusting in Him to provide all that she will ever need. It is a praise song of complete surrender and trust.

And look at how well this teenager knows God's Word, as she recounts the promises and deeds that God has done in The Scriptures. She knows of the Abrahamic Covenant in which God had promised to bless all nations through his descendants. She recounts the Biblical narratives of all those whom God has helped simply because they have placed their trust in Him. And she also knows of the many evil rulers whom God has brought low and thwarted their attempts to harm God's chosen people. Would to God that the teenagers of our day and time knew The Word, as well as, Mary did back then!

As Mary sang her song of worship and praise that day, she was placing her full dependance upon the God Who had not only chosen her, but also offered her the salvation that would come in the form of the Child she carried. And a God who would take note of her in her humble estate, could also be counted on for protection as well. God cares for those whom He calls. As King David has so wonderfully said:

"I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous abandoned or his children begging for bread." **Psalms 37:25**

So when you trust in The Word of The LORD and submit to it with your whole heart, then He Himself becomes your source of everlasting joy. And that is how you can have the guarantee of a "Merry Christmas" this year! Did you notice in Mary's song the kind of people that God cares for, as opposed to the ones who are left out in the cold? It is the humble who trust in Him and receive His care. Those who are arrogant and reject His truths are left with a miserable existence, fending for themselves. Now do you understand why this world is so angry. They have rejected the only source of everlasting joy.

Jesus Christ was a descendent of King David. And David knew a bit about being rejected by the powers that be in this world. He was forced to live in caves as the wicked King Saul hunted him down trying to take his life. But while David was in those caves a wondrous thing happened, *The Bible* tells us that other outcast people began to flock to him.

"So David left Gath and took refuge in the cave of Adullam. When David's brothers and his father's whole family heard, they went down and joined him there. In addition, every man who was desperate, in debt or discontented rallied around him, and he became their leader..." **1 Samuel 22:1-2**

Just like His ancestor David, King Jesus, The Son of God will welcome any who are despised and rejected, if they will only humble themselves and put their full trust in Him. If we submit ourselves to Him, trusting in His Word completely, then He becomes the source of our joy. And that joy shall never end. And this is the secret to happiness in this dark and sinful world.

And let all those who share in this Joy say... TRUTH!!!