

Joy of Man's Desiring

Luke 1:46-55

December 24, 2005

Intro

It's Christmas Eve and almost all of the stresses of Christmas are behind us. Now there is just the enjoying of family, of gifts, of lots of food.

But one of the most important parts of Christmas is when we honor the Lord with our hearts and soul. That's what I love about Christmas Eve, because the stresses have distracted us from the point and the reason of Christmas.

The title of the message comes from a famous cantata written by Johann Sebastian Bach called *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. It's a beautiful composition, but the title itself captures the very point of Christmas.

In these verses we learn about the importance of Christ's appearing as the answer to man's desiring.

I. Jesus Came That We Might Change

A. There's a reason the world needs a Savior

- Because it's lost. The world is headed in a direction that's away from heaven, not toward it.

Ephesians 2:12, "remember that at that time you were separate from Christ ... without hope and without God in the world."

- But God wants to change more than just whether we are headed to heaven, He wants to change who we are.
- We love the famous stories of Christmas and one of the things that make them powerful is when someone is changed.

Illus – Ebenezer Scrooge, *"If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"*
– *A Christmas Carol* (Charles Dickens)

But then we see that Scrooge is a man that is transformed from the misery, selfish, cold-hearted, lonely man into a generous, loving, and warm-heart friend.

Illus – Then there's the famous Mr. Grinch who hated Christmas and thought to put a stop to it by robbing Whoville of its presents. Of course, we know the reason was because his heart was two sizes too small.

As Dr. Seuss reminds us, the problem was in his soul.

But we are touched by transformation; Grinch's heart grows three sizes when he sees that Christmas is not about selfishness. In fact, he is forgiven of his deeds.

- In John 4, there is another transformation when the Samaritan woman meets Jesus.

John 4:41-42, Many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have

heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”

B. Change must begin the soul

- A vital part of this good news must not be lost on us --- He is given to the world, but He must be received one person at a time.
- God offers, we must accept. It’s a question of the soul.

Illus – The third verse of “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts, the blessing of His heaven.

No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin, Where meek souls will receive Him still, The dear Christ enters in.

John 1:12-13, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Ezekiel 36:26-27, “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

C. A changed heart will exchange gifts

- When we’re young it’s all about what we get. We’ve all remember when we were young and

we couldn’t sleep because we were dreaming about what we would get for Christmas.

- When you get older, you spend much more time thinking about what you will give to others.
- When people first come to the Lord, they often are focused on what God does for them.
- But then there comes a time, when we realize that we are to exchange gifts with God.

Matthew 2:11, “After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

- Each gift recognized who He was:
 - Gold; for a king
 - Frankincense; and expensive element of the priest’s incense.
 - Myrrh; gathered from the cuts of a Terebinth tree, used in anointing oil, mixed with wine was offered to Jesus on the cross (but refused), was used in anointing His body after death.

Illus – A gift is made special by the heart behind it. If a husband brings a gift for his wife, but has an attitude with it, it has little meaning, if any at all.

II. The Key is in Man's Desiring

A. Worldly desires cannot be satisfied

- The desiring of the world is worldly.
- But there is a principle of the diminishing return; it takes more and more of the same thing to bring that rush.
- We are driven by our desires and what we desire has everything to do with who we are and who we will become.

Proverbs 18:1, He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.

- But there is an answer; the freedom that comes from Christ.

Acts 13:38-39, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."

B. There is joy in having a Savior

Illus – Tis the season to be...

- The theme of the season is to joyful and there are many things about this "wonderful time of year" that make it easy to be happy.

Illus – The smell of pine needles, the taste of eggnog, all the lights on the houses, the Christmas songs, etc all make this season a wonderful time of year.

- It's very easy to forget that the reason we have Christmas is because we need a Savior.

Luke 2:10-11, But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

- He saved us because he loves us. "God so loved the world..."
- There is also a joy that comes simply from being in the presence of the Lord, and there is a heaviness that comes from being away from Him.

John 15:9, 11, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love...These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."

- The Catholic Church believes that Mary was without sin as Jesus was, but verse 47 speaks of her need of a Savior.
- But note also that Mary calls Him "*my* Savior." It really must be a personal relationship, not someone else's.

Illus – Mark Lowry wrote a song that captures a beautiful thought in this regard..."Mary Did You Know?"

C. The joy of the Lord is our strength

- Mary's psalm speaks of all the things the Lord had done for her. Vs 49, 51, and 53.
- And we can say the same thing. What a wonderful response to the Lord, recognizing the great things the Lord has done.
- All other major religions of the world have man saving himself by his own works, only faith in Christ gives us "the greatest gift of all" eternal life simply by faith.

Illus – We used to sing a very simple praise song with the words, "The Lord, has done great things for us... for he has filled our mouths with laughter, filled our tongues with singing, the Lord has done great things for us."

Psalm 126:1-3, "When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us; and we are glad.'"

Conclusion

Jesus is the "joy of man's desiring." Understanding that is the key to understanding the reason and the spirit of Christmas. It is God that changes our desires and therefore changes our lives.

Mr. Grinch:

You're a foul one, Mr. Grinch.
You're a nasty, wastey skunk.
Your heart is full of unwashed socks
Your soul is full of gunk.
Mr. Grinch.

The three words that best describe you,
are, and I quote: "Stink. Stank. Stunk."

Your soul is an appalling dump heap overflowing
with the most disgraceful assortment of deplorable
rubbish imaginable,
Mangled up in tangled up knots.