

Joy from Above
Luke 2:1-20

Joy's pretty popular this time of year, I would say. It's one of those attributes that gets a lot of face time in December, a lot of holiday cheer for several reasons, too. I'm sure you've experienced this. These aren't all bad things. I don't know what brings you holiday cheer; maybe some of you walk in, and you see the decorations, the lights, the trees, the wreaths, and you start to just melt in your heart, and it gets you. You have cheer because of this. The songs that can be sang, the songs that you hear on the radio, in stores, the Christmas music that goes 24/7 during this time is somewhat addicting and helpful for good conduct and cheer. Just a general attitude of giving that you might experience or you like to take part in; or just to receive or maybe to be on the receiving end. Friends and family - some people just value the times. And there's cheer and joy that comes from the time spent with friends and family in a season like this. It's the simple things, like a nice holiday beverage from Starbucks or something like that. While other people like the bigger things like seeing Star Wars seven times for episode seven in the opening weekend or something like that. So whatever it is, there are lots of different kinds of manifestations of this joy that comes out in this month no doubt, this time...this holiday season. And so, you see a lot of joy that comes out. The question is, where is that joy coming from, and how long does it really last? Unfortunately, I think we're guilty of this as well as many people who do not know the Lord; they're filled with joy in this time because it's convenient or because of some circumstance that has come upon them that has benefitted them in some way. But then come January, you get right back to the grind and the normal flow of things, and all of a sudden, it seems like that joy's gone, and it was just temporal. It was superficial joy.

Well, this morning, we don't want that to be the case, obviously, because we know God has called us to be a joyful people. He's called us to rejoice. He's called us to be joyful at all times. Be joyful always. So how do we even go about such a daunting task? Well, we need a joy that supersedes everything that we've already talked about. We need a joy that is lasting, that is eternal, and that's what we see in the birth of Christ here in Luke, chapter 2, which is where we're going to be this morning. So we're going to track this kind of progression of joy and how it develops in our text. And the first thing we'll see in the first 7 verses is a lack of joy; call it joy deficient. There's not a

whole lot of joy to be found in these first 7 verses that set the scene for the birth of our Lord. It's a lack of joy, essentially, is what we'll see.

So, if you wouldn't mind, just go ahead and follow along in your Bibles and we'll read the first 3 verses of chapter 2 in Luke. Starting in verse 1, it states "Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census each to his own city." So Luke gives us some background. Luke as the historian that he is gives us some background to how this all sets up, and we get eventually to the birth of Jesus Christ. Well it's pretty simple here. It's a very historical event that takes place. The King of Rome, essentially, Caesar Augustus, who is ruler over all the known world at that time, he puts out this decree for a census to be taken. He wants to number all the people and get a good record of all the people that are under his command and domain. And it's not just to have a number to say look at how many people I rule over, but it's more particularly to have a formal way of taxing all those people and getting money. So, he puts out this decree to get this all formalized and documented so that he gets the money that Rome deserves. So this is what kind of kicks things off in verse 1. And so, even this impacts the region of Syria and down into Israel; and as verse 3 says, "...everyone was on his way to register for the census each to his own city." And so, as we know, this will lead to, obviously, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, and from a human perspective at this point, it looks like nothing's really happening, just kind of looks like the King's doing what he's doing, that Caesar wants his money, and so, he's enacting this decree. When in reality, we know what's happening. It's God directing and moving the heart of the King to do exactly what He wants. It's God directing the affairs of men perfectly in His sovereignty to get Jesus to where He needs to be in Bethlehem to be born. It is God that is ordaining all these things, even the very movements of the politicians and the kings of the time. So this is the background that sets our scene.

And then, we get introduced to the characters in verses 4 and 5, and we learn about this Bethlehem journey. Verses 4 and 5...we see this Bethlehem journey that takes us specifically to where we'll be. Starting in verse 4, "Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged

to him and was with child.” So what we learn here is that Joseph is one of these people that is affected by this decree, and so he has to go back to his home town which is not where he currently is. Currently, he is up in Nazareth which is in the region of Galilee. It’s in the northern part of Israel. This decree requires him to go back to his home town where his lineage, where his ancestry, originated from. Which, we find, tracks all the way back to David who’s from Bethlehem. Well, Bethlehem is in the region of Judea which is in the southern portion of Israel, so this is a problem. Joseph is affected by this, and he has to make this journey all the way down to Judea, specifically, Bethlehem. This isn’t an easy journey, alright. If you were to go straight down from Galilee-Nazareth, all the way down to Judean Bethlehem, it would be a seventy miles straight shot, but because of Samaria that’s right in the middle, and the fact that the Jews don’t really like the Samaritans, and the Samaritans don’t really like the Jews, they would have to go around. So that adds about twenty miles, and so you get a ninety-mile journey, alright, a ninety-mile journey that Joseph has to take just to go down and obey this decree and register for the census.

And so he does, and notice that he also takes along with him his soon to be wife that he’s engaged to, that he’s betrothed to, Mary, and she is with child as we’ve already covered in Luke chapter 1. We find out that Mary gets a vision from Gabriel, the angel, who says you’ll be with child, but you will remain a virgin, and this child will be a special child; He will be the Messiah. He will be the Son of God that will come. So Joseph, rather than abandoning Mary and saying, you just stay here in Nazareth and I’m going to go down and register for this, he protects her, and he takes her with him - this kind of noble move. And once again, this is God orchestrating the affairs of men to play out exactly what He desires. As the prophets say in Micha 5:2, this was necessary for the birth of the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem. Micha 5:2 states, “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judea, from you One will go forth for Me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” So this is what the prophets had, really, prophesied from long ago, that this Messiah would be born in this little town, this Judean town of Bethlehem. And so here’s Joseph escorting his betrothed, Mary, down to Judean Bethlehem for this event to take place.

What we finally see in this background section is the birth, the actual birth, of Jesus Christ that takes place and it’s shortly recounted here by Luke in

verses 6 and 7. So verse 6 states, “While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her first born son; and she wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” So notice the text says, “While they were there...” So, obviously, there’s different depictions, several depictions, of this scene of how Jesus was born, and what took place, and what it was looking like. Well, we just notice that it’s very simple and very vague in the sense that “While they were there...” at some point in Bethlehem, Jesus was born. So this doesn’t entail that, you know, Mary’s on the verge of contractions and delivering Jesus right as they step foot into Bethlehem, necessarily, it just means that they could have been there for days, weeks, even a month or so, before Jesus was actually born. So “While they’re there...” this event comes about. And it’s interesting you have to notice this, it becomes blatantly obvious from the way that Luke presents it. Compare in your mind how would you expect the entrance of the King of the universe, the entrance of the Messiah, the entrance of the Son of God, to look to this world, and then, how is it presented here in our text? So, in your mind, you probably have a picture of what it would look like for the Son of God to come down, to wrap himself with flesh, and to become a baby. And how would that all go down? How would that happen when he comes to this earth? And then, how does it actually happen in our text? Well, you might have a big picture in your mind, but what we have in our text is something very simple. “...she gave birth to her first born son...” “...she wrapped him in cloths and she laid him in a manger...” or a feeding trough. I don’t know if the first thing you went to was feeding trough in your mind, alright, for animals, an animal feeding trough - picturing the Son of God, the Messiah, laying there swaddled in a feeding trough, in a manger. And so, the first question is why...why a feeding trough? Was that the thing to do back then? Was that the popular bassinette-crib kind of thing? Not necessarily. Not at all.

The text goes on to say, “...because there was no room for them in the inn.” And so, what we kind of get in our mind is this depiction. This happens in Christmas plays all the time; this understanding that they go down to Bethlehem, it’s late at night, and they knock on the public motel or the public inns, and they say do you have another room for us, for Joseph and Mary who’s about to give birth? And there’s a really mean innkeeper, and he says, no room here, and he sends them off. And you think, aw, what a mean innkeeper. How dare he. Alright, you’d think he’d be a little nicer. The reality is that scene probably didn’t even take place. First of all, Bethlehem

is such a tiny town. Did they even have a public inn that housed several people in different rooms? Probably not, because Bethlehem was already small. Secondly, it comes from the word inn. It's what it has in the English text, the word inn, but really, this word is better understood as guest room. It's really the same word that is used for later on in Jesus's life when he would have the last supper with his disciples, and they got together. They had dinner in the upper room or the guest room. The guest room, that's the same word, so this really isn't the word for a public inn in a city of some sort. This is the word for guest room; and so, we have this kind of picture starting to unfold. They were not allowed in a guest room of a house; and instead, they had to be somewhere where there's a feeding trough or a manger to place baby Jesus when he was born.

It might help for us to have an understanding of what houses looked like back then, houses in that time, in the first century. So your average house had multiple levels to it; some of them had three, some of them had two. The really fancy ones had a very large upper room that you could fit a lot of people for dining, which is probably what happened when Jesus was with his disciples in the last supper. But your average house had at least an upper level of some sorts for sleeping and taking care of other affairs; while downstairs, you had the animals that you would bring in at nighttime because of the cold and protection so people wouldn't steal them. So you had these kind of different levels, and what was really common was on the upper level you had a guest room of some sort. You had some sort of attachment to the house, some sort of way to house people, and in this culture, hospitality was everything. At this time, in the Palestinian culture of First Century AD, hospitality was everything.

And so, you start to put these things together a little bit, and you're trying to imagine this scene. How did this actually take place? If there wasn't this mean innkeeper in this public inn, then what did happen? Well, once again, Bethlehem was a small town, and people probably knew each other, so why is Joseph going back there? Because his ancestry, his lineage, his family line, goes back to Bethlehem. So he's going back there. Is there a possibility that there's people in Bethlehem that know Joseph and his family? Yeah. Is there a possibility that he has family there? Absolutely. So, how hard would you think it would be for Joseph and Mary to walk up to a house of someone they know, a cousin, maybe even a relative of some sort, and knock and say, hey, can we stay in your guest room? That doesn't seem very farfetched.

That seems like a very normal thing to do. And what do you think people would do, even if people were kind of exploding with people in their houses, and housing people. How do you think people would respond if they see someone that is pregnant and about to give birth? They'd probably kick people out, and say, yes, take the upper room. You deserve it; you're pregnant. Alright, we want to give you the guest room. You deserve it. But our text is pretty clear; there was no room for them in the guest room. And so seeing that it seems to kind of be pretty basic in how it should unfold...it doesn't go the way you would think it would.

And so instead, what probably is happening is you have Joseph and Mary showing up. Mary is pregnant; but have Joseph and Mary consummated their marriage and had the final ceremony? No, they haven't. So, if that hasn't happened, obviously the family would know that. Relatives would know that, because they would have been invited. So instead Joseph and Mary come strolling in to town and Mary's pregnant, but the wedding never took place, so this looks like a scandalous scene. This is a bad scene. It doesn't look good for Joseph and Mary. So, how does the family respond? Well, they're in a catch 22 because, obviously, they love their family, but at the same time, they know that it would be a terrible and shameful thing to invite these people that have engaged in scandalous acts of fornication of some sort to invite them in and house them. So, more than likely, the family and the friends in Bethlehem said, sorry, we can't house you. And the best that they could give them was the lower level with the animals. And so, potentially, here's Joseph and Mary on the lower level with the animals of some house and placing Jesus swaddled in a feeding trough or a manger of some sort. So you have these two expectations in your mind; one of what you would expect Jesus, the Messiah, what His entrance into the world to look like, and the other one of what Luke paints for us. It's pathetic. It's a pathetic scene that doesn't match up. It's a paradox when you think about this. This doesn't seem to make sense.

So at this point, you would ask the question, how do you think Joseph and Mary were feeling? Do you think there was a lot of joy at this occasion? Perhaps some, for obvious reasons - to have your first born come into this world. But to be neglected, to be rejected by family and to be stuck in this position, there's probably a lack of joy. There's probably discouragement that's going through their minds. So, this is what they're going through. There's a lack of joy, but God doesn't leave it at this. Luke continues our

scene and we learn of how God remedies this situation and brings great joy into it.

So the next thing we will see is joy declared. Starting in verse 8, God in His sovereignty starts to orchestrate and work something nearby that will impact Joseph and Mary and bring joy to the situation. Reading in verses 8 and 9, we learn of a new group of people; “In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.” So we encounter a frightful moment. And we get an introduction to some new characters here; the shepherds who are in the same region. They’re nearby, not far off. We’re still down in Judean Bethlehem. We’re still down in that region, and we see these shepherds that are out doing their business as shepherds watching their flock...and then an angel of the Lord appears. And this is pretty common, the response of the shepherds; they respond with fear. They’re frightened, and if we look back at Luke chapter 1, we would learn that this is the typical response. And, if you actually look at the whole bible, this is the typical response when people are encountered with the glory of God or an angel representing and bringing a message of God. Basically, every time the human, or the prophet, or whoever it is, falls on their face; they are just utterly terrified at the scene. And so, that’s what we have here. We have shepherds that get terrified at this angel of the Lord that shows up and the glory of God that’s shining around them; so it’s a frightful moment.

It doesn’t stop there, obviously. We learn that it quickly changes in terms of its tone to a joyful message. A joyful message that is given, and that’s what we find in verses 10 through 12; “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. This will be a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ ” So this is the joyful message that is now communicated from the angel to these shepherds that were frightened. So this is reassurance that first takes place. Don’t be afraid. Your automatic response to God’s glory is terror and fear, which is right, but don’t be afraid. We actually have good news for you, good news of great joy. And this is the key here; you want lasting, eternal, joy? This is the key. This is the source. This is where it comes from. It comes from the good news. The good news is the source of great joy. It is eternal joy that will last

for longer than the month of December, for the entire year, for your entire life. It is the good news...the good news is not just sufficient for saving you, which is amazing, but it continues to sustain you and provide you joy every day, every moment, of your life. This is what we learn. The angels bring good news of great joy. And notice how the angel says, "...which will be for all the people." This is not just for the shepherds. That's exciting for them. They're Israelites. They're Jewish people. They have an expectation of a Messiah. They have an expectation of a Savior to come, but the angel broadens it and says, it's not just you guys, it's going to all the people. And that's what we learn through the rest of the New Testament, that this message, this good news, would be great joy for, not just the nation of Israel, but for the Gentiles, and the entire world, even to us today; this is good news of great joy.

So we raise the question, what is this good news? What is it? What is the good news? It is simply stated in this text in verse 11; "for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Those first words, "for today..." that is significant; that is significant understanding of the timing of what is taking place after years and years, and hundreds of years of prophets talking about this day, talking about the entrance of the Messiah into the world, talking about the Savior who would come and completely change everything. This has been anticipated for years by the Jewish community, and now you have some random shepherds, it seems, and they're hearing that today's the day. After years of studying this, an understanding, and waiting, and hoping, and anticipating, you're saying, it's today? Today's the day that this Messiah has come in the city of David. Right away our reminder of Micah 5:2, that prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and notice how personal it is for you; "...there has been born for you a Savior" This is impacting individual lives of even these shepherds.

So once again, we ask this question, what is the essential elements of the good news? And we find it here in three titles, really. There's these three titles that are given to Jesus "...born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord." "...a Savior who is Christ the Lord." And it's so hard because it's easy for us to read over words like this throughout the entire bible and the word Savior just becomes old somehow, unfortunately. It really is an unfortunate thing; but could there be better news? There's no such thing that is better news than to hear that you have a Savior because this is the need of

mankind. No man escapes this need. Every man is condemned before God and destined for the wrath of God. And so, there is only bad news that falls upon all mankind, but when there is news of a Savior, could there be anything better? It addresses the most important need, the most basic and fundamental need of mankind, a Savior, a Savior who would deliver you. And we know this all throughout the bible and the New Testament, that this is through the forgiveness of sins, sins that have been forgiven, taken away from us. This is exactly what the angel told Joseph in Matthew 1:21; your wife... “She will bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins” It’s what the name Jesus means, Savior. He saves. So, there’s joy in knowing that we have a Savior. Let us not forget that. There is joy that is eternal in knowing that we have been saved from the wrath of God. We’ve been saved to no longer living for ourselves in selfishness. We’ve been saved unto good works and good deeds to glorify this God who has done this.

This is good news, but it doesn’t stop there. Jesus is not only labeled as the Savior of mankind, saving us from our sins, He’s also labeled as the Christ or the Messiah. He is the Messiah; the one who’s been promised from the Old Testament in all these prophecies over and over again. This promised Messiah, that would come and not just forgive people from their sins, not just take away their sins, and take away the punishment that’s due to them, but He would take this entire broken world and restore it and bring it back into harmony and peace with God. He would take the kingdom of God that is in heaven and He would bring it to this earth. This is an amazing message, this message that means not only our individual salvation but a complete universal restoration. That’s good news. That is good news, that there is a hope that we have, not just in what has been done in His death on the cross, but what He’s yet to do. He’s coming again for judgment. He’s coming again for final and ultimate realization of our salvation. This is good news. There is great joy in this. The pain, the harm, the struggle, the sin, it’ll all be done away with, and it’ll all be completely transformed into a new heaven, a new earth, to give glory to God. This is good news of a Savior, of a Messiah, that has been born.

And lastly, He is titled as the Lord at the end of verse 11, the Lord. How do you know that He’s actually forgiven you of your sins? How do you know that He will actually come and transform everything and make all things right? Because He’s God. He has the authority of God himself. At the end of

Jesus's life, that's what He said before He ascended up into heaven. He told his disciples all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Jesus says, I'm God. I have this authority. You can trust... You can know for certain that your sins are forgiven, and that I will come back and make all things right because He is the Lord. This is great news. There's no stopping this. This message is already in effect, and it can't be undone because it's God himself that's carrying it out. This is good news, and it ought to produce great joy in us. It ought to have produced great joy in the shepherds, and it ought to do the same for us in our own individual lives. So this is what the angel declares in these simple concise titles of Jesus. We learn the good news that produces great joy, and then he gives the sign of the Savior. "This will be [the] sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger," he states in verse 12.

To confirm this message, we next see a heavenly multitude...a heavenly multitude that shows up on the scene. So, we just had an angel speaking to these shepherds the good news of great joy, and now in verse 13, we see, "And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.' " After an announcement like this, after an announcement of a Savior, of a Messiah, of God Himself, coming to this earth, only God can receive glory for something like this. And so, here are the shepherds and knowing full well that they're not seeing things with this one angel talking to them, they now have a revelation of a whole heavenly host, a whole army, an array of angels that are giving glory to God because only God could receive glory for such a scene as this. And then the affirmation that peace is promised on the earth for those who respond to this Messiah in faith. For those who actually respond appropriately, God will be pleased with them, and they will find peace, for those who believe this message, this good news of great joy, that has come. So we have the depressing scene of Joseph and Mary without joy, a difficult time, and then you have this amazing message that is proclaimed to these shepherds. Well, next we see this joy delivered to Joseph and Mary. God in His kindness, in His sovereignty brings this beautiful scene to Joseph and Mary, this message to bring them joy. This joy is delivered.

So verses 15 and 16 we read, "When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has

made known to us.’ ” So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as He lay in the manger. So we see the shepherd’s resolve, the shepherd’s resolve. So after this amazing revelation of good news of great joy from the angel and from this heavenly host, the shepherds then have a little conference among themselves of what to do next. Well, what do we do? Well, let’s go tell people. It’s night time, people might be asleep. So what? Let’s go tell people. What about all our sheep? This is like our livelihood. This is our job. What are we going to do with them? We’re just going to abandon them? How are we going to work this out, two of us go, two of us stay? What do we do here? More than likely, probably, what happened here is these shepherds got together and said, this is amazing. There is no way we’re going to somehow go, “we’ll wait until everyone wakes up and tell them the Messiah is born.” If the Messiah’s really been born, I think the people of Israel ought to know. So the shepherds decide, let’s go. We need to go. So, probably, what they did is they got together, brought the sheep and go into the town of Bethlehem, the town, not the city, not the major metropolitan center, the town, the small kind of residence of Bethlehem. And so, these shepherds go with all their sheep, causing a commotion, waking people up. They’re looking for a baby, and so as they’re going, they’re knocking on doors asking people, has a baby been born here, specifically, in a manger? Have you seen that? And so, they’re going and they’re asking these questions, and asking, and trying to find a baby. So probably by this point, you have people in Bethlehem getting stirred up, waking up, asking questions. Why are you looking for a baby? Well, an angel appeared to us, and told us a Messiah was born today. That’s going to get people’s attention; so by this point, the whole town of Bethlehem is awake, stirred up, and they’re looking for this. Is this actually true? Is this really taking place? And we find that at this point, they made their way, in verse 16, they came in a hurry because they’re excited and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby lay in the manger. So this was their resolve, after a message of good news, of great joy; there’s no way they could ignore it and wait on it. They had to act.

And the next thing we see is the message recalled. So these shepherds make their way and they finally get to Joseph and Mary, and what do we read in verse 17? “When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.” They got there, they arrive to the scene exactly as they told it would be. Probably a lot of people, an entourage with them by now, the whole town gathering around Joseph and Mary. They’re

going, what is going on? Where are all these people and sheep coming from? And then the shepherds speak; you don't know what we just heard. We just heard that this baby is the Savior. He is the Messiah that we've been waiting for. He is God Himself. He is the Lord. Do you think this might've been a moment of joy for Mary and Joseph? Do you think that might have been a moment where kind of burdens were lifted as everyone was amazed at this message of a Savior that was right there in the manger, of the Messiah who had finally come, of God Himself in human form? This is the joy that God in His sovereignty and His kindness delivers to Mary and Joseph in a very difficult time.

So lastly, we're left with the response...the people's response. In verse 18, we read "And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them." So in verse 18, that's where we learn there are many people there. This is just not Joseph and Mary and the shepherds; this is Joseph; this is Mary; and this is several other people because all who heard it wondered at these things. This wonderment, this amazement, at the message doesn't necessarily mean that they were saved or they believed what they had heard. They were just simply kind of oohed and awed by this. They were shocked, and they were amazed at what this vision was that these shepherds got, and what they really said, and could it be true? Because all throughout Jesus's ministry, people continue to respond like this. He does lots of miracles; people are amazed, but they don't believe in Him. He does amazing teaching; people are amazed, but they don't believe in Him. He does all these actions throughout His ministry, and you just have amazement every time, but not necessarily faith. And so, potentially, right here is the beginnings of that; people amazed at this message, but not necessarily putting their faith in it, some maybe, some probably not.

But Mary in verse 19, "...Mary treasured all these things pondering them in her heart." In opposition to the kind of overreaction of the people, Mary is contemplating these things as she receives the vision from Gabriel, and gets told that she's going to give birth to the Messiah. As these shepherds come deliver this message, as Jesus grows up and begins to teach in the temple, she continues to treasure these things, and ponder them, and mull them over. She's considering them until finally, they'll give full birth to faith in her own life. While, finally, in verse 20, "The shepherds went back, glorifying and

praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.” They continue with the joy and bring it back to the field with all the sheep that they’re watching. So, an amazing scene where it starts off pretty pathetic and lacking in joy, and then God sovereignly orchestrates the lowly people of society, these shepherds, to hear this amazing message of good news and great joy and bringing that to Joseph and Mary, and all the town of Bethlehem.

So, we come back to where we started. Where does your joy come from? Where does our joy come from in a time like this? It’s easy to get sidetracked. And while all the things that we’ve talked about - decorations, food, people, time - they’re not bad in and of themselves, we must understand that they’re lacking; they won’t last. They’re not eternal. They’re not powerful. The true joy comes in knowing the Savior. The true joy comes in the hope of the Messiah that will come again to make all things right. The true joy comes from God Himself who has the authority to do it all and the power. So I would encourage you, if you’re having your joy come from these superficial things, just beware, because the fall will come and you’ll wonder where it all went; and your joy is gone and it’s because it wasn’t in the right place in the beginning. So, may our joy be in the only eternal true God - Jesus; our Savior, Messiah, and Lord.