God With Us **– wk 3: Mega Joy!**

**What's Your fav Christmas Song? 1-2-3! Who picked joy to the world?**

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come - Let earth receive her King!**

**Let every heart prepare Him room - And heaven and nature sing**

**And heaven and nature sing - And heaven, and heaven and nature sing**

**As a kid – the Toys we thought would bring everlasting joy!**

**My Toys as a kid - GI Joe - 6mil dollar man- games - As teen - Parachute pants - cassettes - boombox - a walkman. Now it's... Life is amazing - remember rotary phone (how long it took to dial) - Then push buttons - long cord for phone - Then wireless! Car phones - brick phone - personal phone (texting) - then smart phone - amazing - can do almost anything - apps for everything! (But when I lose my phone, I lose my mind - don't know anyone's numbers anymore - I can't even call my wife) it's amazing but we get so frustrated whose thrown...?)**

**Life is amazing - but few people are happy. This life is filled with things that try to make us happy - but no matter what we get we still want more... we are rarely happy for long.**

**Few are happy and fewer have joy...**

**Philippians 4:4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16 - Rejoice always... Is that really possible??**

**One of the missing things in Christmas and in the world today, JOY**

**We sing - “Joy to the world the Lord the lord has come” “O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant” “repeat the sounding joy” “Tis the season to be jolly” - But for many Christmas isn’t so holly jolly**

**Today - how to have joy in every season of life - no matter what you're going through - you can have joy**

**I love to laugh and listen to people laugh - Some say it’s not appropriate in church? Church is to be serious**

**(Ecclesiastes 3:1,4) “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven… there is a time to laugh.” (But the writer of Ecc didn’t always feel this way) (Ecclesiastes 2:17) “So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.” – What a downer…**

**Life is not so Merry and Bright for many when…**

* **When - Life seems useless -**

**(Ecc 1:2-4 GN) “Life is useless, all useless. You spend your life working... but what do you have to show for it? ... The world just stays the same.”**

* **When - Life seems tiresome**

**(Ecc 1:4-8 GN) “The sun rises and goes down... the wind blows round and round and back again. Every river flows into the sea... [then] the water returns to where the river began and starts all over again. Everything leads to weariness”**

* **When - Life seems unfulfilling**

**(Ecc 1:8-10 LB) “No matter how much we see, we're never satisfied; no matter how much we hear, we're not content. History merely repeats itself.”**

* **When - Life seems uncontrollable**

**(Ecc 1:15 GN) “You can't straighten out what is crooked; you can't count things that aren't there!”**

**Life can be a downer… that’s why Christmas is so important – When Jesus shows up on the scene – Joy follows**

* + **This Christmas it is time to get your joy back**

**One of my favorite parts of the Christmas story, the shepherds… just another night at work… then God showed up.**

**Luke 2:8-10 - And there were shepherds (the bottom of the social ladder - owning nothing, they cared for others livestock) living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. (Not in winter - did not stay in the field in winter at night – pulling an all nightery – sipping coffee to stay awake) 9An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news (life changing news) of great joy (Greek ‘megas’) that will be for all the people.’” 11Today in the town of David a Savior (the rescuer) has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. (i.e. Messiah – loaded word = long awaited anointed one - God in flesh) 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (the deity wore diapers)**

**13 Suddenly (God releases before them the very reality of heaven - the one angel becomes a choir or thousands) a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, (first Christmas party) praising God and saying, 14"Glory to God in the highest, (The entire OT and history was leading up to this moment) and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. (entire OT leading to this…)**

**Why was his birth such a mega joy thing? What was it?**

**Mega Joy – Getting your Joy back**

**Luke 2:9An angel of the Lord appeared to them… and they were terrified. (What rattles you? - God responds (V.10) – 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy…**

**You need joy - 1. Don’t allow the negatives to rattle you**

**The could have been’s - should have been’s - what if’s – and fears?**

**Moving past fear and negativity**

**- Find the positive in every situation**

**(Philippians 4:8) “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.”**

**Joy is spiritual war – demolish those negative thoughts**

**(2 Corinthians 10:5) “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”**

**- Say something positive in every conversation**

**(Proverbs 16:24) “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” / (Psalm 141:3) “Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.”**

**Train our eyes, mind, and attitude to find the encouraging qualities - don’t let the negatives rattle you**

**John Wooden (Famous coach) – “Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”**

**Luke 2:10 …the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.’” (You can focus on the negative or on what God is doing!) 11 For today in the town of David… (that is so important!)**

**You need joy - 2. Realize God is in control - of the known and unknown**

**More than just an announcement of a location – it declared a fulfilled prophecy – God is still in control!**

**Nothing about the birth of Jesus was an accident.**

**A bigger plan was at work – joy in knowing God’s in control**

**Think about this - In that birth pain – came Joy, but not without pain**

**13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."**

**God’s (favor) amazing grace is declared at his birth – it could not be stopped, it was in motion. For those who have God’s grace – this is a great joy for you!!!**

**Joy in knowing God is working in the known and unknown in our life**

**When you realize God is in control - you don’t focus on what you don’t have, but find yourself thankful for what you’ve been given**

**Ecc 5:19) “When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift of God.”**

**Realizing God’s in charge enables you to appreciate your life**

**If Christmas (or life) is about people, presents, and possessions - THEN - no wonder we lose our joy when life doesn’t happen just right… You will not always be able to give, get, or have what you want.**

**Families are not perfect – loved ones pass on – sometimes you lose your job – sometimes you run out of gas – Joy does not come in a store – in a package – you can’t get it on sale!**

**Happiness is a result of what happens - Joy is much deeper**

**v.15… the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." (They could have said – no I’m cool, I don’t feel like going - but they decided to get up – and go!)**

**You need joy - 3. Take responsibility for your own emotions**

**We get to choose the way we view life & people**

**So easy to blame others – but the choice is yours – get up!**

**(Hebrews 12:1) “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”**

**You cannot determine what happens to you**

**But you can determine what happens in you**

**Luke 2:10,11 - “But the angel said to them, ... I bring good news of great joy that will be for all people. (What is this good news? What is the reason for the Joy? What is the source of the joy?) Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”**

**You need joy - 4. Recognize the source of true joy**

**The reason for Christmas is that YOU needed Him - He doesn’t need us**

**We needed a Savior - A savior for what? Our self – our sins**

**Christ did not come 2,000 years ago; so that we could give each other presents, decorate our houses, have parties and sit on Santa’s lap - He was born to save us from our sins**

**To choose the cradle without the cross – is to miss Christmas**

**There is no Christmas without a cross – that’s why he came.**

**To celebrate the child without the Christ is to miss the Joy given**

**If that baby is not the ONE – there is no joy. It’s just presents.**

**Jesus the true and only source of pure and lasting joy!**

**Joyful when he was poor - joyful when he was abandoned - joyful when he was betrayed - even joyful as he hung on a tool of torture, the cross**

**Jesus embodied a stubborn joy - joy that held its ground against pain and hard times**

**Hebrews - 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, (those gone before us) let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (the traps, the temptations, the hate, the unforgiveness, the habits – throw them off – turn from them – and turn to Jesus) 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (that cross – he endured with Joy was because he saw you!)**

**That night - Those shepherds were told first - why?**

**In that culture shepherds were the bottom of the social & economic ladder - the forgotten - belittled in public letters - despised by those in town) the lowly - marginalized by society - they were chosen to the break the silence of the centuries...**

**The least of people - the least of towns - the least of these...**

**It does not matter who you are - Jesus came for you**

**You see these SHEPHERDS - were more than just field workers…**

**Because of their proximity to the temple, it’s believed these were shepherds who tended for temple lambs bred for temple sacrifices.**

**They tended, cared for, raised, and loved these lambs…**

**It’s powerful thought - that these simple shepherds who looked after the temple lambs were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world - they were all too familiar with the great cost of sin**

**They understood the need for a savior – and the hope of heaven – they understood this good news – that “THE ONE” is here!**

**They did not let the negatives rattle them**

**They embraced a God who is in control**

**They gave their emotions to the giver of peace**

**They embraced true Joy – Jesus, God with us!**

**Joy is knowing that whatever life brings, Jesus holds my life**

**Joy is knowing that whatever I have done, Jesus paid the price**

**The heavenly host invites us to join with the shepherds in recognizing that the savor has come – to save us and shepherd us!**

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come!**