

# The Multiplied Joys of Christmas

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**Bible Text:** Luke 1:39-45  
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Luke 1. Rejoice it's Christmas. Christmas is a time where you must rejoice and the biblical narrative shows us that everything about the coming of Christ, the birth of Christ, is surrounded by praise, rejoicing and joy so we're just going to unpack this. It's going to take all day today and all day next Sunday and the Sundays all the way through December 24 to get all that I want to get done and I'm even combining some things as we'll just do an exposition of this narrative of our Lord's coming and hopefully it will be a blessing to you to look afresh at the glories of what we're about and what we should be thinking about during the Christmas season.

Now, our text primarily is Luke 1:36 through 45 but for context, I'm going up to verse 26 of Luke 1 and then go down through verse 45.

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 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; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. 36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. 39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby

leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

I call this "The Multiplied Joys of Christmas." The multiplied joys of Christmas. First of all, I. and this will cover all of verses 36 through 45 and then we'll go back and pull three more truths out of that very same section. But first of all, I. Joy is given to be shared. Joy is given to be shared. Now let me just point out to you that joy is given, this joy we are talking about is not the joy the world knows. This joy we are talking about is not the joy that comes from maybe a sweet time with a child or a fun time with the family. That can be a part of this but this is a unique joy. This is a joy brought about by the Holy Spirit of God surrounding or concerning the things of Christ. This joy is meant to be shared.

So this coming of Mary, she literally the Bible says runs to the house of Elizabeth, her relative, because the angel has told her, "Mary, not only are you going to have a baby, and of all things, your baby will be conceived of the Holy Spirit of God and he is the promised Savior, the promised Messiah." You've got to understand something: literally for upwards to 3,000 perhaps more years, every orthodox Jewish girl hopes and dreams that she would be the one to give birth to the promised Messiah, the promised Savior God had for a long time proclaimed would be coming to Israel. But Mary is the one and then she hears her relative, some say cousin, we don't know for sure but her relative Elizabeth also who is an elderly lady who could not have a child, had a barren womb, she has miraculously been enabled to conceive and have a child so these are coming together as Mary comes to her and as they come together, this is a prototype of the local church. It's a prototype of Christian fellowship.

So Mary and Elizabeth get together and they enjoy something together. Two parts to this. First of all, they enjoy something that no one else will ever again enjoy: no one else will ever be Elizabeth and give birth to John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Savior, Jesus Christ. There is only one time that is ever going to happen. And of course, no one else will ever be like the virgin Mary, who was conceived by the Spirit of God and would give birth to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, God Incarnate. So they have a fellowship that we can't enter into, however, everything around their fellowship centers in the person of Jesus Christ so there are several foundational aspects of our fellowship of joy that we have that we can learn from them. Theirs indeed was a unique and great joy but all Christian fellowship is unique and all Christian fellowship has a greatness because it's of God and Christian joy has always intended to be a shared joy. God did not save you to let you be on an island and do your own thing. You are saved to be a part of a fellowship of other believers and in coming together, our joys are shared, and even in coming together our joys are multiplied and we see that in Mary running to be with Elizabeth.

Now look at verse 39, it says, "at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah." You know, it's true that if something of unspeakable greatness and joy has happened to you, you just want to share it. Well, it certainly happened to Mary. The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and says, "You're going to have a child. Not only are you going to have a child, you're going to have a child while you remain a virgin. The child will be of the Holy Spirit and he'll be the promised Savior that God has been promising Israel for decades and decades and centuries and centuries. And also your relative, Elizabeth, has been allowed to conceive and she's going to have a baby. She is six months along already." So Mary runs and wants to share this joy with Elizabeth and that's the way it is.

Notice, Elizabeth is a relative. Elizabeth has had a similar experience to Mary. Elizabeth has had a divine visitation through her husband, Zacharias. He saw an angel who proclaimed that his wife would become pregnant and she would give birth to the forerunner of the Messiah, and even that John the Baptist would be filled with the Spirit before he was born. So Elizabeth has had a similar experience as Mary. Elizabeth had a miraculous conception. It was a miracle that she, a barren woman, could conceive a child. And then the child promised to Elizabeth had an extraordinary calling. John the Baptist was the final prophet, if you will, of the Old Testament age, and his final, his job as the final prophet will be to proclaim Christ is coming, Christ is on the agenda next. That was a one time, unique, special calling. So Mary is in a situation that Elizabeth is in a very similar situation, so when we have this kind of joy, we want to share it with somebody else.

The Bible says she "went in a hurry." She believed what the angel had told her, that's Mary, and she wanted to go and spend time with Elizabeth in this fellowship. Now, this is a Spirit led union. God is causing this to come about. Again, a prototype of local church fellowship as you must know, you must know that God has saved you and God has led you into fellowship with the saints of God in a local church. That's what's happened here.

So they are both bursting with joy, and for you ladies, I know you can't really grasp what it would have meant in ancient Israel to have been a woman like Elizabeth was who could not bear a male child to carry on your husband's name within the covenant family of Israel. You were considered the greatest of failures. It was the greatest of shame to be a wife and not provide for your husband a male child to carry on your family name in the covenant family of Israel. So for Elizabeth to conceive, then of all things, compare that to Mary, for Mary to be told that she herself would bear the Messiah, the Savior. These ladies had incredible joy individually but when they come together, their joy is multiplied. That's what God intends to happen.

She goes, the Bible says in verse 39, this is Mary, she runs to Elizabeth's house to a city in Judah, or of Judah. Probably it's the area of Hebron, which means hill country, the region around Jerusalem. Hebron was the area, it was where Abraham, Isaac, Sarah and Jacob had their home and their burial place. Hebron is the place where God met Abraham and promised Abraham that he would have a special son which was a prophecy of Christ. David was crowned king in Hebron. So a lot of special things happened in this region.

Verse 41, look at it again, "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby," that's John the Baptist in Elizabeth, "leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Can I just make a side note here about the sanctity of human life? We know from chapter 1 early on when the angel spoke to Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, the angel told Elizabeth's husband that John the Baptist would have the Holy Spirit before he was born. I submit to you, church, God does not give his Holy Spirit to a clump of cells. He only gives his Holy Spirit to persons, to people. John the Baptist here when Mary approaches and she has the Messiah in her womb, John the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth leaps for joy having already been filled with the Holy Spirit. How did the unborn John the Baptist know Christ was near? The Holy Spirit was in him.

Be done with this worldly and wicked feminist nonsense about what life is about and about what womanhood and motherhood is about. Understand that if you have a baby in your womb, that baby is the gift of God. God did that. This nonsense, "Well, this man did this to me." This foolish shameful terminology that's used, "Well, this is some burden, this is some hindrance. This will keep me from fulfilling my dreams and my wishes," which is where the abortion industry comes from. Even the man in the same way could say, "Look, she went out and got pregnant." I want to tell you, God gave you that baby. This didn't just happen. It's the gift of God.

Not only is it a gift, it's an assignment. It's God's assignment to you. God gave Mary the assignment to be the mother of the Savior of the world. God gave Elizabeth the assignment, "You're to raise up John the Baptist who will be the forerunner of the Messiah, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ." And if God has given you a baby, he has given you an assignment which speaks of a stewardship because that child ultimately is not yours, that child – listen to me – is made in the image of God. That means he or she is God's and you have a stewardship to raise that child according to God's dictates – listen to me – not your own. Some of you moms, listen to your pastor this morning, this isn't my first rodeo. I've been a father. We've raised kids and we've had to do a lot of repenting along the way, amen? We had a lot of ideas that we thought, "Well, this is the way to do it," and then we started doing it and realized, "Nope, you're stupid. You don't know how to do it." Amen? That's part of the process, is it not? That's part of the process. This is an assignment from God. It is a stewardship from God. God ordained this for you so let's be done with... Oh, the last thing, this baby is a blessing from God. He or she is not a burden. He or she is not a problem. He or she is not in the way. They are God's blessing. In common grace there is no greater blessing than children. Yeah, they're a responsibility, they're an assignment, they're a stewardship, but there is no greater blessing in common grace than children.

Well, here we see in verse 41 as Mary enters the room and speaks to her relative, Elizabeth, they are both just bursting with joy and John the Baptist leaps for joy in the womb of Elizabeth over the presence of Jesus Christ. John was conceived by the agency of a miracle but, you see, Jesus came to be in the womb of Mary by a greater miracle than John. John had a righteous father. The Bible says Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous people but Jesus had an infinitely greater Father. God the Father was his only father. John

is called the forerunner of Jesus. Jesus is the promised Messiah. The angel states that Jesus is the Son of the Most High, that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus will sit on the throne of his father, David, and he will reign forever and his kingdom will have no end. No such things like that were promised to John. These are two very different beings in the wombs of these two women.

Verse 42, "And she cried out with a loud voice," that means they are just beside themselves. Have you ever seen women get together and just, "Ahhh!" Have you ever seen that? That's what's going on here. They are overwhelmed, just beyond themselves. Verse 42, "And she cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'" So Elizabeth acknowledges that Mary's calling and service that God in grace has ordained for Mary, no other woman but Mary, surpasses any calling or any other service ever been given to any other woman in the history of the world.

Mary is honored by Elizabeth – listen now – but Mary is not worshiped by Elizabeth. Do you get that? When God chooses to honor a vessel, it's always just grace, but if God honors a vessel and gives them a role or a job, then we honor God by honoring the vessel he chose to honor. So Elizabeth shows this high honor and respect for this, if you will, office of service Mary has been called to. Now superstition, like we see in Roman Catholicism, warps this, turns it around. They come up with extra biblical revelation where the Pope says he has now been told by God that Mary herself had an immaculate conception and Mary herself lived an immaculate life. Mary was born without sin and Mary herself lived above sin. That is not true. That's superstitious worship of Mary. It is unbiblical. It is heresy. Everything, everything, everything from the moment these women realized Jesus is in the womb of Mary, is centered on the greatness, the superiority, the preeminence of one, that is Jesus Christ. Not Mary. There is a pagan notion in Catholic theology that calls Mary a Co-Redemptrix, that Mary saves you like Jesus saves you. That is a lie. Hell will be full of people who cried out to Mary and never found Christ. "Pastor, why are you so strong on this?" I'm strong on it because it ought to be strong and I want you to go out in this world, I want our young people to go out in this world and when they hear just the hint of unsound doctrine, bang, they can see it and they know that's not sound and I'll not give that a listening.

Well, verse 43, Elizabeth continues on, "And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?" Again, Elizabeth showing proper honor to this role God has given Mary but not worshiping Mary. She calls the baby in Mary's womb her Lord. That's a great and powerful term. That means the one in Mary's womb has the right to rule and the one in Mary's womb has the power to save.

You say, "Well, how in the world did Elizabeth at this point understand these truths when the baby is still in the womb of Mary? The Messiah, the Savior is just an unborn child at this point?" The Bible says she was filled with the Holy Spirit. You do understand the Holy Spirit reveals the things of Christ. You don't understand the doctrines of truth, you don't understand the doctrines of God, you don't understand the doctrines of salvation, you don't understand the doctrines of the church unless the Holy Spirit enables you to get

it. Elizabeth could see these things. Plus I think these ladies were students of the Scriptures to the best they had the Scriptures available and understood them. The Spirit enabled them to be ready for this moment by studying the truth of the Old Testament that prophesied these very things.

Verse 44, "For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy." One thing we see here is that everybody here has faith and everybody here has joy. Faith and joy.

She says, Elizabeth says to Mary in verse 45, "blessed is she who believed." Mary believed what the angel told her was happening to her. Now, that's in contrast to Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, who when he was in the temple and the angel said in the temple to Zacharias, "Your wife is going to have a baby and he'll be the forerunner of the Messiah," and what did Zacharias do? "How do I know this is really true?" So what did the angel say to Zacharias? "Because of your unbelief, you're going to be caused to be mute. You will not be able to speak until the baby that God is miraculously giving to you and your wife Elizabeth is born." And he was. So here we see Mary believing what the angel said about what God was doing through her, but Zacharias, Elizabeth's husband, had trouble and he was in unbelief. So faith is here emphasized again.

One scholar points out that there is a contrast here between the old creation and the new creation. There is so much I would like to say about that. You do understand there is the first creation, Adam and Eve, and then there is the new creation Jesus is now forming called his Christians, called the church, and he's going to keep forming that one and he's going to do away with the old and the new is going to be his for all eternity. Eve represents the old creation. Mary represents the new creation. Eve in the garden believed Satan. Mary in humility believed the angel Gabriel. Eve believed man could become like God. Mary believed God was becoming man. Eve embraced the lie and she and Adam died in the garden of Eden because the wages of sin is death. Mary embraced the truth and found eternal salvation and eternal life through her son she was bearing, Jesus Christ.

Faith never fails but we see here that God intended not for Mary to have this joy by herself or Elizabeth to have her joy by herself, he wanted them together. Joy is given to be shared. That's why you come to a local church. You're not just to enjoy your salvation by yourself. It's meant to be enjoyed with a multitude of other believers in fellowship with them in a church.

2. And these will be much more quick. The nearness of Jesus brings joy. In the entire narrative, we see praising and rejoicing out of the coming of Jesus. We see it out of Zacharias, Elizabeth's husband. We see it out of Elizabeth. We see it out of Mary. We even see it out of the unborn John the Baptist. When Jesus is close, your joy is increased. "Pastor, I don't have any joy." But where have you gone? He has not moved. You get near him and you get your joy back. You get near him and that's where the joy is. Mary runs with joyous excitement to Elizabeth's house. John the Baptist leaps for joy in the womb of Elizabeth, his mom, as Jesus is near. Elizabeth cries out in joy over what God is doing in all of this. The nearness of Jesus brings joy. One of my great griefs as a pastor is

to see some of you content with the fake joy of this world, the counterfeit joy of this world, the hollow joy that's not really joy at all. I long for you to have the greatest of joy and the nearness of Jesus is joy.

3. Spiritual fellowship produces joy. I'm not talking about a sentimentality that blesses your heart, "Boy, I was blessed today." That may or may not mean anything as far as what God wants you to have. Far too many churches today know about an embracing of sentimentality but they don't know spiritual joy. True spiritual fellowship is an embracing and rejoicing over true biblical doctrine as the Spirit of God enables me and as the Spirit of God enables you to say, "Yes, I get that! And yes, that gives me happiness and that gives me encouragement! That gives me joy!" In the spiritual fellowship of the saints of God, in the small groups you have, fellowshiping with one another, sitting under the preaching of the word, that spiritual environment increases, it produces joy.

It seems far too often in today's world, congregations are social clubs more than spiritual fellowships. They are built on sentimentality and worldly emotions that the world would have happiness in, and things that are not in themselves wrong but they are not the joy God wants us to have. It's sentimentality instead of true spirituality. The emphasis is placed on whatever stirs or moves the human emotions instead of what is truth according to God's word. Of course there is a balance. We are to have joy in our babies and our grandbabies. We are to have joy in a good meal. We were to have joy in sweet fellowship. There are a lot of things we have joy in that the world has joy in but we have a greater joy and we must have that joy.

When we were looking at plans to build this building you're sitting in this morning, we went to one of the largest churches in the South. They had just bought many many acres of land. They were in the process of getting ready to build a brand-new structure out there, and we went by that new acreage they had bought and there was the most elaborate, professional, beautiful ball fields you've ever seen. I guess soccer fields, softball fields, baseball fields. I mean, full-fledged professional upscale stuff. Then we went to our appointment with the church administrator of that church and we said, "We went by your new property and there are no buildings there but the athletic fields and facilities are phenomenal." He said, "Yup." He said, "We had to do that first or it would split this church." Boy, my heart sank and what I wanted to say to him is, "You don't have a church. If whether or not you have great ball fields would cause you to lose members, you don't have anything to start with." Is there anything wrong with a church having good ball fields? No, unless it's built on ball fields. By the way, there can be a lot of joy in playing a ball game together, amen? That's okay, but we don't build churches on that stuff. That's robbery. That's stealing from you the joy you ought to have. You can have joy in ball fields out in the world but there is a joy we have that is better than that, it's greater than that, it's longer-lasting than that, it's deeper than that, it's more glorious than that, it's more wondrous than that, and it lasts for eternity. That's the joy we strive for.

Spiritual fellowship produces joy. And by the way, this coming together that we might multiply our joys, our spiritual joys, is essential to us. We won't make it without each

other. You see, Mary and Elizabeth needed each other at this point. Now, if you're a Lone Ranger Christian out there and you've got a spirit of pride and you say, "Well, I've got my own thing and my own thing going out here." Well look, your thinking is wrong. We need you and you need us as Mary needed Elizabeth and Elizabeth needed Mary.

4. Spiritual humility is the secret of joy. Something very powerful comes out here and that is the Spirit of God has enabled Elizabeth, Mary too but we're going to focus on Elizabeth, a spiritual humility and sometimes I call this a Gospel humility. The same idea. And notice we see it so strongly, verse 42, "And she," Elizabeth, "cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you,'" Mary, "'among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb,'" Mary. And then verse 43, "And how has it happened to me, that the mother," that's you, Mary, "of my Lord would come to me?" Notice Elizabeth who herself now, Elizabeth had a great honor bestowed on her by God, but she completely forgets all of that as she meditates on the person of Christ. Now listen, listen, and she also honors God's chosen vessel to bear Christ, the virgin Mary. In other words, she doesn't worry about, "Well, I don't know. I thank God I'm having John the Baptist but why couldn't I have Jesus? Well, wait a minute, why didn't I get that role?" Do you know what that right there is? That attitude is a joy robber. If you stay there, you're going to serve in your local church full of anger, full of grief, full of bitterness, and you will not have joy. Do you know what some of you need to do this day is what Jeff Noblit has had to do from time to time and still has to do from time to time, I put my foot of faith down and I look at my Lord and say, "The place you have put me today is just fine with me, Lord. Give me the grace to be humble and faithful in the role you've given me and I'll gladly honor those who somehow in grace you have chosen to honor with positions I don't have and that's fine."

That's the secret to joy. Now, I'm not the best example on earth but I can tell you with a clear conscience that when I was your associate pastor, I endeavored with all that I had to honor the senior pastor of this church. I honored his position, I exalted him before the people, I raised offerings for him on his anniversaries because that was God's role for me. And you've got to be willing to say like Elizabeth said, "I have my role and Mary has got her role. My role has some honor, hers far far more honor but that's fine. I'm good with all of that. Lord, if it never ever changes..." Do you remember a sermon I preached before called "The Night Shift"? "If you keep me on the night shift, hallelujah! I ought to be in hell. That's wonderful for me!" Amen? "I'll take the role you've given me." That's the secret to joy, that spiritual enabled humility.

The Bible says in Romans 13:7 that we are to give honor to whom honor is due, and I'll say more about this when we go through Philemon in our exposition. Brother Steve this morning just in passing said, "You know, I've been working with Pastor So-and-so," and he mentioned one of the pastors we've been mentoring and discipling through Anchored in Truth Ministries, and do you know what the issue is? He's been there several years in his church and he's done a good job, he's fought the fights, they are reforming the church to be more biblically sound, but one of the ways some of the resisters are getting to him is keeping his salary solo he can barely barely survive and he's thinking about leaving the church because they are so stingy in their support of the pastor. I'm going to tell you,

there is going to be a severe judgment for men like that. There is going to be a severe judgment for men like that. You mean to tell me God is going to send to these churches, men, young men who are bold enough and courageous enough to try to build the church on the word of God and there are stingy, nickel counting knuckleheads in the church who are going to try to punish that pastor and keep him humble by keeping him just barely able to get by? The Bible teaches exactly the opposite.

What's my point? If God gave that man in that church that position, he's to be honored for that position just like Elizabeth was glad to honor Mary. If you're husband, that's an honored position and, wives, honor that position. God gave your husband that position. Men, your wives were given to you as a precious treasure and a co-laborer and a helpmate. You are to honor them as a coequal under the grace of God. Children, you are to honor the position God gave your parents. They are your authority. They are God's instrument to bless you and guide you. You are to honor that position. And that's the secret to joy, being satisfied where God puts you. Now there is nothing wrong with saying, "Lord, if you've got something else, I'm ready for that if and when it's time."

5. Do we have 5? I don't think I gave them this point so they just left it off. No, you've got to have 5: Jesus is Lord of joy. Jesus is Lord of joy. When Gabriel spoke to Zacharias, he spoke of Jesus as Lord. When Gabriel spoke to Mary, she referred to Jesus, or he referred to Mary rather than Jesus was Lord. When Mary spoke back to Gabriel, she acknowledged that Jesus was Lord. When Elizabeth speaks to Mary when they come together, she acknowledged Jesus is Lord. And John the Baptist leaps in the womb in his mom Elizabeth because Jesus has come near is testifying that Jesus is Lord. Jesus was Lord in eternity past. Jesus was Lord in Mary's womb. Jesus was Lord at his birth. Jesus was Lord at his earthly ministry. When he was nailed to the cross, Jesus was Lord. He was Lord when he surrendered his life up to the Father's will to be a sin bearer for his children. He was Lord when he was buried in the grave. He was Lord when he arose from the grave. And he is Lord now as he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High where he faithfully intercedes for his own. And he will be Lord when he comes again, but until then, he saves us and gives us a good strong spark of joy, and then he puts us together – this is his idea – he created something he called ekklesia, the Greek word means the church, he called you out to be a part of the local church where your spark of joy can connect with somebody else's spark of joy and create a multiplying of joy, a flame of joy.

God's truth, meditating on this this week in my study, at times my heart was so full of joy. Just so full of joy. And then I come in here and I preach it to you and the Spirit enables you to grasp it and joy in it, and then my joy is multiplied. That's the way it's supposed to be. The multiplying joy.

We're just getting started. There is so much joy about Jesus' birth. The multiplied joy of Christmas. Here's the root of that whole joy: in every just and righteous sense, God could have and God could have come only in judgment against us, but in grace and love beyond comprehension, he chose to come not to judge us but to save us. So when we contemplate that, what else can you have but joy? But in order to save us, it took a literal sacrificial substitute for Jesus had to become man. So when he became man and we see that and we

know that, then that increases our joy because he didn't just come to be man, he came to be a sacrifice for our sins.

Some of you are sitting here and you know nothing of the joy of Christmas, you only know of the sentimentality and worldly fake joys that surround Christmas in our world. I call on you today to turn to Christ. Own him as your Lord and Savior. Receive him and know the true joy, the true joy that lasts forever.