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Great Joy, Luke 2:10-11

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Introduction

- We are reminded that Jesus is “the reason for the season” at Christmas. Cliche as that might be it’s a good and true reminder.
 - However, being that this is true, how do we respond to that? What does it mean for us at Christmas?
 - This Advent series is on how we should respond to Christmas and to Jesus.

What is Joy?

- The angel declares “good news of *great joy*” to the shepherds.
 - We looked at the good news last week. The good news was the announcement of a Savior.
 - In order to understand the good news you must first recognize that you need a rescue. You need a deliverance from your sin. Jesus’ birth is God’s first step in delivering you.
 - So, what is the reaction of those who have been rescued? Tears of joy.
 - Have you ever been in a bad situation and were delivered? You felt relieved from the consequence you were sure was coming for you.
 - Free from fear... that’s a kind of joy.
- **Point:** Christmas gives us great joy in the arrival of our Savior.

What Stops Joy?

- Christmas is a joy-achieving project by God. He's saving us from everything that robs us of joy and is giving us joy.
 - What robs us of our joy that he is rescuing us from? Sin takes away joy.
- First, sin takes away joy by the suffering of the world.
 - Our world is fallen due to sin and is therefore universally marked by suffering.
 - Suffering threatens our joy. This is why it's important to understand the difference between joy and happiness.
 - Christmas offers us joy that cannot be taken away.
- Second, sin takes away joy as we struggle against our flesh.
 - Christians can become weary in the fight against their own sin.
- Lastly, sin takes away joy when sin is indulged.
 - Sin is pride. It places self at the center. What is the result of that?
 - Is it any coincidence that breaking the first commandment will naturally result in breaking the last commandment?
 - Sin produces envy, which is a kind of mourning. Thomas Aquinas defined envy as "sorrow at another's good."¹
 - Envy is a breaking of the second great commandment to love your neighbor. It's a denial of love, which requires that we "weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice." Instead it weeps at those who rejoice and rejoices at those who weep.
- **Point:** Christmas gives us rescue from the enemy of joy—envy.

How Do We Get It?

- Christmas is only the beginning of the story. Jesus would defeat sin through his own death on the cross to deliver us from death.
 - Therefore, he turns our mourning into joy, our envy into satisfaction and love.

End Notes

¹ Quoted in Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue*, 121.