

THE BIG IDEA: A lot of joy leads to a lot of change

The Take-Off

There are 2 times every year when you already know what I'm going to preach about: Easter and Christmas.

Sure, we try to come up with clever ideas that can help present the story in a memorable way - especially in a way that helps you as you invite others to come share in those moments - but at the end of the day, the Christmas story is simple and life-changing.

Messing with that too much can cause people to respond to church much the same way they're responding to the latest Star Wars installment, The Last Jedi.

Some love it, some hate it, but most everyone wonders if it was true to the original story and characters.

Sometimes, we can get too cute, too clever, and so every year I find myself reading the Christmas story again and asking the Holy Spirit to breathe fresh insight into my heart.

He never fails to do just that, and this year, The Unexpected Christmas Playlist was just that - a fresh way to look at a story (at THE story) that never needs to get stale.

We've taken popular Christmas songs and used them to point to timeless Christian truths like hope and peace.

Last week we talked about how important it is for our hearts - the core of who we are - to stay warm in a cold world.

This week, we've heard Phil and Jennifer sing our next song - "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" - and I want to take a few minutes and share why I believe that followers of Jesus should be the best rejoicers on the planet.

Turn to **Matthew 2** and let's start reading about the wise men and I think you'll begin to see why, if anyone is going to be rocking around the Christmas tree, it should be believers who understand what really happened at Christmas.

1. A whole lot of joy

- a. Let's pick up the story in **Matthew 2:9**.
- b. The wise men are still following a star that they've been following for about 2 years.
- c. They've followed without knowing where or when it would stop, and then, without warning, it does.
- d. Verse 10 says that when they saw the star, they were "overjoyed."
- e. In other versions, the word overjoyed is translated "they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."
- f. What does that even mean? Look like?
- g. Maybe something a little like this...
- h. **[VIDEO / Price is Right winner]**
- i. I don't know if these wise men actually celebrated like that, but there had to have been some dancing and fist pumps going on!
- j. Why? Obviously, they knew their search had come to an end, but I think there was more to it than that.
- k. They knew there was something special about this king, and while they may not have known exactly what it was, we do.
- l. **Philippians 2:6-11** tells us that Jesus came here in order to get us there.
- m. Jesus left His throne to bring us home, that's the good news of the Christmas story
- n. That winner on The Price is Right rejoiced over a MOMENT that would fade, but these wise men rejoiced over a MOVEMENT that would change everything
- o. When we really understand the power of EMMANUEL - God with us - we'll receive His presence with JOY just like these men did, and that joy will cause things to change in our lives.

2. A whole lot of change

- a. The Big Idea that I want us to take away from these wise men is that **a lot of joy leads to a lot of change**
- b. They received the baby Jesus with "exceeding great joy" and that joy changed the way that they worshiped, gave, and lived.
- c. **Joy changes how we worship**
 - **Matthew 2:11**
 - These were powerful men, and they FELL DOWN and worshiped
 - The joy they had about Jesus was greater than the pride they had about themselves
 - How would we respond to winning the lottery? How much greater the gift of Jesus!
- d. **Joy changes how we give**
 - Look again at the end of **verse 11**

- We all know that they gave Jesus 3 gifts, but I'm struck by the phrase "opening their treasures."
 - Honestly, how many of us would be willing to open our accounts to someone and allow them to take a look? Not many.
 - When we receive Jesus with joy, our giving isn't just what we've planned, but sometimes is seen in how we handle even what we don't give.
 - I want to live a life of open treasure for Jesus - take what You can use and use it how You choose.
- e. **Joy changes how we live**
- [Matthew 2:12](#) / They had another way to go back, but it was changed
 - We don't know what "another way" looked like for them, but we do know that not many of us like it when OUR plans are changed
 - I'm not suggesting that all of us will suddenly like change, but I am suggesting that when we truly receive the present of His presence, we'll be willing to change
 - [Matthew 13:44](#) / In his JOY, he went ... / everything happened in JOY
- f. Joy changes the way we worship, the way we give, the way we live because joy doesn't come from us...
- g. It's offered to us by a God who came to be with us.

The Landing

[VIDEO / Four words]

Joy leads to change, and perhaps the greatest change Jesus offers us is a reason to change. Not because we have to, but because we want to, because He is worth it.
Let's pray.