

Joy To The World #5 - Find Joy Even When You Feel Low

- Well Merry Christmas everybody. Welcome to the second annual Trinity Church Christmas Eve party. We're so glad to have you, can you guys think the kids for me, you kids did great, thank you so much. Well, if you are new, it is my honor to welcome you. My name is Pastor Mark, one of the pastors here at our church, and this is such a fun, great day. And what is my favorite thing, is all the kids in the room. When you hear the kids making noise, it just means we're blessed. So the louder you kids are, the more blessed we feel. So make all the noise you want, get your wiggles out, we're glad to have you. And here's what I want you to know, we are here to celebrate someone, who is that?

- [Congregation] Jesus!

- That's Jesus. We're here to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ. So I get to do my favorite thing, and that's tell you about him. So for those of you that may or may not know, Jesus Christ was born about 2,000 years ago. His first name, Jesus, means God is my savior. Christ means the chosen, anointed one of God. He is special in all of human history. He had a mom, he had a dad, he had brothers, he had sisters. He grew up in a small rural town. He came into the world with teenage parents who were peasants. He lived a relatively poor life. And what's really curious, is we don't know much about his life until he's about 30 years of age. Until that time he was obeying his mother and father, he was working in a carpentry job with his father, Joseph, and then all of a sudden he started a public ministry that lasted only about three years. And what's really interesting, is in those three years, Jesus Christ made the biggest impact of anyone who has or will ever live in the history of the world. So in his wake, here we are, Christianity. The entire Christian religion and church is in the wake of this life, and person, and work, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And today more songs are sung to him, more paintings painted regarding him, more books written concerning him than anyone who has lived in the history of the world. Jesus is in the category unto himself. We actually measure time by his life into BC, which is Before Christ, AD the year of our Lord, which indicates the birth of Jesus. And at the turn of the millennium, Newsweek had a cover article by which they said, "By any secular standard, Jesus is the dominant figure of Western culture." What they are saying is this, that no one is like Jesus, no one is equal to Jesus, no one is alongside of Jesus, and we're here to celebrate his birth that changes our life, amen?

- [Congregation] Amen!

- So there's two unique things I want you to know about Jesus, number one, most religions find their headquarters in a holy place. That is usually the place that the founder of that religion died. Christianity does not have a holy place because our founder is not dead. Three days after dying he rose from death, come back on Easter, we'll tell you the rest of the story. But today we celebrate his birth, on Easter, we celebrate his resurrection, but nonetheless, we don't have a holy place as our headquarters, because our founder, Jesus Christ, is alive. So instead of a holy

headquarters in a place, we have a holy head in the person of Jesus. So as I like to say, it's all about Jesus. Number two, and this may shock you, there is no other major world religion, where the founder declared themselves to be God, other than Christianity. Jesus openly, publicly, emphatically, repeatedly said that he was God. He was opposed for three years. He ultimately was put to death. And then he came back from death just to simply prove the point, "I told you I was God." And he was and is God. So today, as we gather together, we are doing so, to celebrate the biggest person in the history of the world. And we are part of the biggest party in the history of the world. Today in the wake of this man, Jesus Christ, Christians, billions of us, followers of Jesus are meeting all across the globe, to come together, to throw a birthday party for Jesus Christ, amen?

- [Congregation] Amen!

- So that's why we're here. So usually I preach very long sermons, but as a Christmas present to you, this one will be shorter. If you go to a regular church, this will just feel like a normal sermon, but for those who regularly attend, this'll be a gift. It will be short in my recommendation, so nonetheless, we're gonna jump into a book of the Bible called Philippians. We've been studying it here at the Trinity Church, we'll pick it up again this Sunday. And what we're talking about here is joy. This man, Paul, writes this book, Philippians and his theme, his treatise, his thesis, is joy. And he is talking about Jesus Christ as the source of joy, just like the angel said when Jesus was born, "I bring you good news of great joy for all the people. Today, Jesus Christ has been born." And as we pick up this theme in Philippians, we'll be in chapter two. And I wanna look at three things that Jesus' life does, and the changes he wants to make in your life starting right now. Number one, Jesus makes selfish people servants. Paul says it this way, Philippians two, one through four, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ," well he's talking about Jesus, "Any comfort from love," God's love for you should come for you. "Any participation in the Spirit," what he's talking about there, is the same powerful God presence that anointed, appointed, and empowered Jesus' life, wants to come and change your life so that you can live by the same power source that Jesus Christ did. "Any affection and sympathy," the way God treats us should God cause us to have affection and compassion for others. He says, "Complete my joy by being of the same mind," this is agreeing, "Having the same love, same heart, being in full accord, and one mind," unity not division. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look out, not only to his own interests, but also the interests of others." What he is saying here is this, that we were born into the world and this is all we know. And so, the way people behave and treat one another and the kind of cultures that we create, we tend to think that that is normative, and so we behave in that way. You need to know that sin has entered the world and because of that, our behaviors and our cultures, they are not the way God intends them to be. And so what is normal to us, is abnormal to God. And what he's saying is, that the prevailing mood of the world is selfishness. Everybody asks the question, what do I benefit? How do I gain? What is in this for me? And as a result, we use and abuse people, rather than love and serve people. And so Jesus comes down from the kingdom of God and he brings the culture of the kingdom with him. And the culture of God's kingdom, is not selfishness, but it is in fact, servanthood. And so what he is talking about here,

is Jesus' birth, is the beginning of his serving of us on earth. Now, when it comes to this issue of serving, we live in a world where we like to pay people to serve, but we don't want to serve. And how many of you are in customer service? And this is a rough time of year, right? People are not nice, why is that? Because they don't appreciate service. But our God in his kingdom, holds is a high value servanthood, serving and service. During Jesus' life on earth, there was an argument that broke out among some of his followers. And the debate was, who is the greatest? which is kind of a silly argument when you're with Jesus, right? You shouldn't need to vote on which one is the great, the one born of the Virgin, that water skis without a boat, maybe he's the greatest. But anyways, what they don't understand is, servanthood and humility. So Jesus asked them, do you wanna be great?

- [Girl] Yes.

- And they said, "Yes, we do." And rather than rebuking them, he redirected them. And he said, "Well, if you wanna be great, you need to be a servant." But in the kingdom of God, it is counter-cultural. And he goes on to say, the Son of man, speaking of himself, didn't come to be served, but to what?

- [Congregation] To serve.

- To serve and to give his life as a ransom for many, that's how Jesus became our Savior. I need you to see that Jesus was born into human history to serve you. He loves to serve people, he has this desire to help you. He considers you a blessing, not a burden. He wants to build you up, he's not coming to beat you down. Jesus humbly served us by becoming a human being. God became a man. Jesus humbly served us by living a life on the earth as we do, experiencing sickness, and opposition, and hardship and betrayal, and poverty, and strife, and conflict. Jesus served us by ultimately going to a cross, which was a form of execution in the ancient world, and he died to serve you. He died to serve you. And then they buried him, and three days later he rose, he ascended into heaven, and I have good news for you, right now, Jesus is still serving people.

- [Man] Amen.

- You can pray to him, and he will hear, and answer you. You can cry out to him and his presence will come and comfort you. That our Jesus didn't just serve, he continues to serve. He loves you so much, and he is happy to serve you today. And what he wants that to be for you, is not only him serving you, but you learning to have the posture of a servant and serve others, and to serve others. And this is so crucial as we head into Christmas tomorrow, when the family gets together, if everybody has a mentality of, I'm here to serve and consider your needs above my own, it will be a joy-filled environment, and the kingdom of heaven will come down into your home. If the attitude is one of selfishness, it will be a less cheerful environment. And so what Jesus wants, is to serve you and then help you learn how to serve others so that you can have a healthy, loving relationship with God and also with others. I made a quick chart for you on

three kinds of relationships, a selfish person and a selfish person, they have a competitive relationship. They're always trying to take more and win, it's score keeping. Selfish people with a servant ends up in a cruel relationship. One person gives, the other takes, and it is not a mutual reciprocity. The best healthiest relationships are two servants. Here's what I'm telling you, when you wake up tomorrow, if you wanna have a good day, think, how can I serve? How can I help? How can I serve? How can I help? And you'll be enjoying that same example that Jesus gave. And if you will take this posture and mentality tomorrow to consider the needs of others above your own, if everyone has that attitude of gratitude, it changes the entire dynamics of the home. Here's what I'm telling you, Jesus came down, and he came down to set an example that would provide an opportunity for us to have healthy marriages, healthy families, healthy relationships, and joy to the world, amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay, so guys what that means is tomorrow, write it down, you're gonna do some dishes, okay? Don't even pray about it, just take that as the word of the Lord, okay? That's what I'm telling you. Don't make mom cook everything, don't make mom clean everything, help mom out. Number two, Jesus makes proud people humble. He goes on to say, Philippians two, five through eight, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ. Jesus." What he says is, if you meet Jesus, if you love Jesus, if you serve Jesus, if Jesus has forgiven you, your mind changes, you have a mindset reset. "Who though he was in the form of God," so Jesus is God, "Did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself," taking the form of a what? A servant. "Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself." Circumstances can humiliate you, but only you can humble you. Circumstances can humiliate you, but only you can humble you. Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. And again, here, he's comparing and contrasting the culture, the world out there, and the kingdom of God that rules and reigns overall. And what he is saying is, in the world we live, it is common for people to honor, to value, to esteem, to pursue pride, arrogance, so much so that we use words like self-esteem, self-improvement, self-actualization, and self-help. All of those are different ways of saying, "I can take care of me, I don't need him." And there's a pride to that. Pride is such a deeply rooted issue in Western culture. I've got five kids and when our kids were little, I would read stories to them. So I got this big book that included a lot of the stories from the canon of Western literature and civilization, some of the great moral stories that we read the kids to build virtue and character in them, which was great, that's great and good. But the one virtue that wasn't included, and there were no stories pertaining to in the history of the canon of Western literature, was humility, because our culture doesn't consider humility as a good thing, it's a bad thing. But when Jesus comes down from heaven, he comes to serve us and he comes down to bring humility to a world that is proud. And as we look up to the culture of the kingdom and the character of our King, we learn a lot about humility. Let me say a few things about humility. And first of all I will just say this, all of us are in process, when it comes to humility. If you're the person that is like, I used to not be humble and I fixed it, you get the grand prize for the least humble, that's just how this works, okay? Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but it's thinking

of yourself less. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but it's thinking of yourself less, so that you can think of God and others more. Here are some comparisons and contrasts between pride and humility. Pride, it's our greatest enemy. Humility, is our greatest friend. Pride, we compare ourselves to others, we can feel a little arrogant. Humility, we compare ourselves to Jesus and we're really humbled. Pride criticizes the success of others, humility celebrates the success of others. Pride is about me, humility is about Jesus and other people. Pride leads to arrogance, humility leads to confidence. It's that with God's help, I am capable of doing what God asks by God's grace. Pride leads to independence, I don't need God, I don't need you, I don't need anyone. Humility says, "I need God, I need you, I need help. I'm not okay by myself." Pride is a destination, let me just tell you this, you can get there, you can arrive at pride. Humility is a direction that we need to continually seek and pursue. Why do I tell you this? Well, because when Jesus came down he brought humility. He brought humility to a proud world and Jesus is humble enough to serve you, and he's humble enough to serve me, and he wants us to learn how to be humble enough to serve others. And if you will take this same mindset that Jesus Christ has, I promise it will transform your marriage, if you are married, it will transform your family, if you are parents, it will transform your extended family, if God has blessed you with generations of lineage and legacy, it will improve in every way, your relationships and close friendships. Because ultimately, if someone is humble and serves you, it is very easy to do life with them, amen? If someone is proud and demands that you serve them, that is a very complicated, difficult, painful relationship. Well, how do we move from pride to humility? Number one, we don't become humble by focusing on our pride, we become humble by focusing on the humility of Jesus that ultimately, as we look to Jesus and we see his humility, it births in us this increased desire to be humble servants because we have been served by a humble God who has in fact served us. And here's what's interesting, who is the greatest person in the history of the world?

- [Congregation] Jesus.

- Jesus, not a trick question. If you're new, when I ask a question, there's only two answers, Jesus and those are the only two possible answers. So I'll ask it again, who's the greatest person in the history of the world?

- [Congregation] Jesus!

- Jesus is. Who's the most beloved person in the history of the world?

- [Congregation] Jesus!

- Jesus is. Who's the most humble person in the history of the world?

- [Congregation] Jesus.

- Jesus is. So those go together. Greatness, gratitude comes to those who are humble. God

says it this way in the Bible, he says, "I oppose the proud, but I give grace to the humble" for those who humble themselves, God lifts them up. Think of Jesus' humility with me for a moment. We tend to pick up the story of the birth of Jesus at that magnificent scene where he is born of his mother, Mary, who was probably a teenage peasant girl around junior high age, he's laid in a feeding trough. But the story of Jesus starts before that because Jesus is eternally God without beginning or end. Paul is here telling us that at some point in history, Jesus entered in as a human being. But prior to that, he was still existing, living, ruling, reigning as God. So when Jesus was in heaven, what was he seated on?

- [Congregation] A throne.

- A throne! When he came to the earth, he traded it for a manger, which is a feeding trough for animals. I heard we have an alpaca in the back, is that true? I heard there's a petting zoo, you gotta go check it out afterward, whatever that animal eats out of, that's what God was laid in as his first bassinet, which is that's, how many of you wouldn't go from a throne to a feeding trough? How about this one, prior to him entering into heaven who was serving Jesus?

- [Man] Angels.

- Angels. I don't care what kind of business you got, your staff ain't that great. Angels, that's an amazing staff. Anytime your staff is singing to you, you got a good gig. Jesus ruling and reigning as God, he had a staff of angels who would sing, and celebrate, and worship him. And then he comes to the earth and does he have other serve him or does he serve them? He serves them. When he's a little boy, Jesus obeys his mom and dad, and does this chores. Jesus then works a simple common job with this father, Joseph, who is his adoptive dad and was a carpenter. Jesus was homeless, Jesus was poor. Jesus walked everywhere that he went, he couldn't afford to ride on a horse or be taken behind a chariot, like many kings and princes do. That he gave up all that he had to come and to live a life like we do. In heaven, Jesus was honored. On earth, he was dishonored. Furthermore, in heaven, Jesus was alive and he came to the earth and ultimately what happened? He died. So what we see, is he goes from the highest place to the lowest place and he does this of his own choosing. He did it to pursue you, he did it to be near us, he came down to love us, to forgive us, to bless us, to change us, to reconcile us to the God who made us and loves us. Jesus is a humble servant, those are holds two big ideas. When you think of Jesus, we know that he came, why did he come? He came to be a humble servant. Now the question some of you may have is, if God lives in glorious, worshiped by angels, has streets lined with gold, which is even nicer than Carolyn. He's got a really good gig going, why would he leave that and come down here to suffer in poverty and to work in obscurity? Out of love. There was a Danish philosopher some years ago, his name was Soren Kierkegaard. He was a Christian and he was trying to use a parable, an illustration, an analogy to explain why would Jesus go from there to here? Why would he go from glory to humility? Why would he go from a throne to a manger? Why would he go from heaven to earth? Why would he go from hearing, "Holy, holy, holy," to "Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him." And he tells this parable, I'll summarize it for you. He gives the analogy that there once was a prince who ruled over a

mighty kingdom. And this prince was very powerful, he was very prominent, and very pre-eminent. And then he decided one day that he wanted to have a loving relationship and take a bride. But his concern was, if he was known to be looking for a mate, he would never be sure if the woman that he ended up with loved him or just wanted to be with the prince and enjoy the benefits of the kingdom. So he devised this strategy and what he decided was, that he would move out of the palace and the castle, that he would take a simple residence, that he would change his appearance, that he would dress as a peasant, and that he would go take a very common laborer's job as a poor person, and he would live that life willingly and gladly. He did that for an extended period of time, and then he met the girl of his dreams, the woman that he wanted to be as bride. They got to know one another, she had no idea that he was the prince and that he had a kingdom. So he proposed, she agreed. She loved him, he loved her, they were married. And then he told her, "Now that we're married, I'm going to bring you home to my house." And she was a bit surprised when they showed up at a castle and she asked him, "Why are we here?" He said, "Well, I'm bringing you home." The gates of the castle open and in comes the prince ruling his kingdom and everyone is cheering and celebrating. And the bride did not know that she was loved by a prince. She looked at him and asked, "Why didn't you tell me?" He said, "I wanted you to love me for me. And now that you love me for me, I'm giving you the kingdom." That little story illustrates why Jesus came as a humble servant. He came to love you, he came for a relationship with you, he came so that you would love him for his character, and that ultimately, if you enter into a loving relationship with him, when all is said and done, guess where you get to go? Into the kingdom, into the kingdom. The third thing that I wanna share with you in closing is that Jesus makes dead people alive. This is ultimately one of the great reasons why Jesus entered into human history. He came as a humble servant and he came to make dead people alive. "Therefore, God has highly exalted him." Wow! Where's Jesus today? He's not dead, he's raised, he ascended into heaven, and today Jesus Christ is alive and well. Jesus Christ is still a humble servant. Jesus Christ is still pursuing relationship. Jesus Christ is still forgiving sin. Jesus Christ is back on his throne. Jesus Christ is surrounded by angels. Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning and his kingdom is extending over the nations of the earth. That he is highly exalted. That ultimately, when you think of Jesus, I don't want you to just think of him as he was 2,000 years ago, I want you to think of him as he is today. In a moment, when we sing, your songs will go into the presence of Jesus. If you pray, your prayers will go into the presence of Jesus. If you ask for forgiveness of sin and eternal life, that request will go into the presence of Jesus Christ. That he is high and exalted, that he is still humbled, that he is still serving, and loving, and pursuing, amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- And this is the good news of great joy for all the people. "Therefore God has," you can clap if you want. "Therefore God has highly exalted him." And that's why we're here tonight. We're here to come in humility, just to seek to honor the one who is highly exalted. "And bestowed on him, that is the name above every name, the name of Jesus." We don't just say God, we say Jesus Christ. He is our God, he is our Savior. And ultimately it is his name that is above every name, your name, my name they matter, his name really matters. "That at the name of Jesus," every

what? "Every knee shall bow." I love this, this is surrender, this is honor. I think the last time I did this, I proposed to my wife, Grace, all right? This is what you do gentlemen, just write that down. Take a posture of humility. That ultimately this posture of surrender and saying, "You are the one who should be honored, and I am honored to honor you. You should be the center and focus of attention, and I am glad to point to you so that others can see who you are because you are incredible," that ultimately every knee shall bow. And I would even encourage you when we go to worship in a moment, if you feel like kneeling, you are welcome to do so. Ultimately goes on to say, "That in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven," and where? "On earth and under the earth," that's everybody. "And that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the father." The whole point is this, that ultimately we are here to declare Jesus Christ as Lord. It meant that's why we're here. And that concept of Lord, that word of Lord, it is something a little strange to our ears, but it was familiar to those who first heard it. God's people were living under something called the Roman empire. It was the largest, most powerful, longest lasting, furthest reaching empire in the history of the world. The one who ruled over all of that empire, his name was Nero, and here's what you would have to say if you were a citizen, "Nero is lord," Nero is lord. And at this point, when Jesus enters into human history, Nero is lord, he is high and exalted. He is seated upon a throne and Jesus is very low. He's a peasant child in a manger. And everyone was saying, "Nero is lord." And then ultimately, when all is said and done, Jesus will be high and exalted and Nero has been brought low. I'll tell you right now, today, Nero is not high and exalted, he is brought low. Today, Jesus who was low, has been brought high. Let me tell you why this is an encouragement. Sometimes during this season, you can feel a little low. You could feel like life didn't work out quite the way you wanted. Maybe financially, emotionally, relationally, marital, it's a difficult season. Sometimes during the holidays, if we can be honest, we can feel like we're a little low, but here's the good news, those who start high end low, those who start low end high. That ultimately Jesus wants to have you follow in his wake and his example. So let me tell you what Jesus has planned for you, Jesus says that one day he will return and our King will bring his kingdom to the earth. And that this world will be utterly and forever eternally changed. There will be no more taxes, there will be no more elections, thank you Lord Jesus. There will be no sickness, there will be no death, there will be no unreconciled relationships, there will be no wars, there will be no bullets, there will be no police officers because they won't be needed. We love them today, but we look forward to the day when we don't need this kind of protection from life on planet earth.

- [Man] Amen!

- That when Jesus comes back, oh, it gets better, he is going to call you by name. If you will call to him by name, he will come back and call you by name, that your body will rise from the dead as Jesus' body rose from the dead. And that Jesus will enter you into a kingdom that never ends. And throughout the Bible, this kingdom of God that you are destined for, if you are a child of God, it is always typified with parties. Jesus goes to parties. He throws parties, kids come and have fun around him. Some of you are wondering, why did we throw a carnival? Why do we have bouncy houses? Why are there s'mores? Why is there snow? Because we're practicing for heaven, that's why we're doing it. Before we get there, we need to get really good at having a

good time. We believe that Jesus is a happy God. We believe that Jesus is a cheerful God. We believe that Jesus is a loving God. We believe that Jesus is a forgiving God. We believe that Jesus is still a humble servant. And so on behalf of our church family and my family, hey, thanks for joining us for this great party. We love you. And I would just invite you during this Christmas season, if you have not received Jesus, receive him as a gift. If you've not received his forgiveness, receive it as a gift. If you have not received eternal life through Jesus Christ, receive it as a gift, 'cause this party is just practice for the party that never ends. And we wanna see you there as well, amen?

- [Congregation] Amen!

- All right, let me pray, Father God, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you Lord Jesus for your humility that you came down to serve us. And thank you, thank you, thank you that you came to bring life, and to bring it abundantly, and to bring it fully, and to bring it joyfully. So Lord Jesus, we want to say in this moment, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord. Lord Jesus, we are here to celebrate and to practice for the kingdom party that never ends. Thank you for all of these dear people that have given us the honor of inviting them. Thank you for all the kids who are gonna drink hot chocolate and get their wiggles out in the bouncy house. Thank you that we can laugh, and have fun, and make merriment because there is a God who loves us, there is a God who forgives us, there is a God who seeks us, there is a God who saves us, there is a God who serves us, and there is a God who is coming again to take us home for the party that never ends. And we look forward to it in Jesus' name, amen. Merry Christmas!