

Sermon Discussion Guide
Sunday, December 13, 2020
The Joy of Christmas
Matthew 1:18-25

There are many things in the Christmas season that bring us joy, time with family, singing Christmas carols and hymns, traditional festivities and decorations, the exchanging of gifts. Some of these activities will be curtailed due to Covid-19, so it will be a different kind of Christmas. Perhaps this presents an opportunity, though. It can remind us that all the joys I mentioned are actually secondary joys. The holiday is, after all, called Christmas. The arrival of Christ is the event that inspired Christmas, and we need to remember that that event is the primary source of the joy of Christmas. Although the world sometimes pays lip service to the spiritual roots of Christmas, we can't expect non-Christians to really grasp why Jesus and the Gospel are the primary source of Christmas joy. This is because true Christmas joy requires revelation, the revelation that comes with conversion.

1. Why is revelation necessary to really grasp the profound reality that is the arrival of Jesus?
2. Jesus came on a mission. Why does the significance of that mission get lost in all the trappings of Christmas for most people in our culture?
3. Why do we who know Jesus through faith in the Gospel, still struggle with getting distracted from the true meaning of Christmas? What do you do to remind your heart of what is really to be celebrated?
4. Jesus said, "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." What does that statement have to do with us receiving revelation from God?
5. How does the ability to perceive spiritual truth differ between believers and nonbelievers?
6. In today's passage, Joseph is in the dark when he first learns of Mary's pregnancy. He doesn't believe her story, so he plans to quietly divorce her. He is probably a very troubled man, feeling hurt and betrayed. He may even feel anger toward God. How do you think that changed when the angel had appeared to him?
7. Joseph had received revelation from God, a revelation of God's purposes in this unusual pregnancy. This was his moment of Christmas revelation. Why is revelation from God so important to receive for us to have an accurate perspective?
8. Assuming that you have indeed placed your trust in Christ, how has your grasp of the significance of Christmas changed since becoming a believer?
9. Joy is very different than happiness. Happiness is dependent on circumstances. While joy can be exultant in circumstances that make us happy, it also is a peace and stability that we have in difficult times. How would the joy of the revelation he received help Joseph later on, when he must lead his family to safety in Egypt? How is the ability to have that joy related to having an accurate perspective because of revelation?
10. Nehemiah 8:10 says that, "...the joy of the Lord is your strength." How does the joy of the Lord give you strength in times of trouble?