

Sermon Notes | 12/21/2025| Joy to the world - Joy Revealed, Received, and Released

Title - Great Joy for All People

Matthew 2:1–11

Greetings in the name of the LORD and savior Jesus Christ, welcome to The well community church – Indian Service

Christmas is one of the most familiar seasons in the Christian calendar, yet familiarity can sometimes weaken its impact. We know the story so well that we risk celebrating the event without encountering its power. The manger scenes, carols, and decorations remind us of Jesus' birth, but they can also become routine if we are not careful.

The Bible does not present Christmas as a sentimental moment, but as a decisive turning point in human history. It is the moment when God stepped into time, when eternity entered humanity, and when joy came not as a concept but as a living Person. The incarnation is God's answer to humanity's deepest problem that is separation from Him.

In our *Joy to the World* series, we have seen that joy was announced from heaven. Today, we move from announcement to experience. The story of the wise men shows us how joy is personally encountered, deeply received, and outwardly expressed. Their journey reveals that joy is not seasonal or circumstantial, but spiritual and transformative.

The wise men were not part of Israel. They did not grow up with the Law or the prophets. Yet they experienced great joy because they responded rightly to the revelation God gave them. Their story teaches us that Christmas joy is available to all people, but it must be sought, received, and lived out.

1. JOY IS REVEALED TO THOSE WHO SEEK CHRIST

Matthew begins this account by telling us that wise men came from the East to Jerusalem. These men were scholars and observers of the heavens, likely from Persia or Babylon. In the ancient world, such men studied the stars believing they revealed divine activity. While astrology itself is not biblical, God sovereignly used their background to lead them toward truth.

This reveals a powerful theological truth, God meets people where they are, but He never leaves them where they began. He used a star to draw them toward the Son. General revelation led them to special revelation.

The wise men were attentive. They noticed something others missed. Seeking always begins with spiritual sensitivity. Joy often begins when the heart becomes restless with the ordinary and hungry for the eternal.

Their journey required faith. They left certainty for obedience. They followed a sign without a map. Biblical seeking always involves trust. Hebrews 11 reminds us that faith means stepping forward without full clarity, believing that God is faithful.

This seeking was costly. It involved time, resources, and risk. Joy that is cheap is shallow. Deep joy is often preceded by sacrifice. Many people want joy without commitment, but Scripture consistently shows that joy flows from pursuit.

Christmas joy is revealed to those who intentionally turn their hearts toward Christ. God does not hide Himself from sincere seekers.

2. JOY IS TESTED BY OPPOSITION, PRIDE, AND SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem, they expected affirmation, but instead they encountered fear. King Herod was troubled. Herod's response exposes the human heart. Jesus threatens every false throne. Where Christ is not welcomed as King, fear replaces joy.

Herod represents pride and self-preservation. He was willing to appear religious while plotting violence. Joy cannot coexist with a divided heart. Where control matters more than surrender, joy cannot dwell.

The religious leaders knew Scripture but lacked desire. They could quote prophecy but would not walk to Bethlehem. Knowledge without obedience leads to spiritual deadness. This is a sober reminder that proximity to truth does not guarantee joy.

The wise men also faced delay. The star that guided them was not always visible. God often allows seasons of silence to strengthen faith. If guidance were constant, faith would be unnecessary.

Joy matures in waiting. Faith that survives uncertainty becomes resilient. The wise men teach us perseverance. They did not allow opposition, delay, or religious indifference to stop their pursuit.

3. JOY IS RECEIVED IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

Matthew 2:10 records one of the strongest expressions of joy in the New Testament. The phrase “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” stacks emotion upon emotion. This is not quiet happiness; it is overwhelming joy.

Why such intensity? Because the search had ended. The sign had led them to Savior. Revelation became fulfillment.

When the wise men entered the house, they saw a child, not a king on a throne. Yet they bowed down and worshiped. Spiritual joy is rooted in recognition, not appearance. They saw what others missed because God opened their eyes.

Worship is the proper response to encountering Christ. Joy and worship are inseparable throughout Scripture. Where Christ is truly seen, the heart bows.

Jesus’s presence satisfies the deepest longing of the human soul. Earthly joy fades because it depends on circumstances. Christ-centered joy remains because it is rooted in relationship.

This moment reminds us that Christmas joy is not about perfection, comfort, or success. It is about presence. Emmanuel, God with us, is the foundation of lasting joy.

4. JOY IS RELEASED THROUGH WORSHIP, SACRIFICE, AND OBEDIENCE

The wise men expressed their joy through giving. They opened their treasures and presented gifts. Biblical worship always involves offering. Joy that is genuine expresses itself outwardly.

Each gift carried meaning. Gold acknowledged Jesus as King. Frankincense recognized His divine nature. Myrrh pointed to His suffering. Even at His birth, the cross stood in the background. Joy does not deny suffering; it understands redemption.

After worshiping Jesus, the wise men obeyed God’s warning and returned home by another route. Their encounter changed their direction. Obedience is evidence of transformation. Joy that encounters Christ results in changed priorities.

Biblically, joy is never meant to be hoarded. It is meant to be shared. Lives transformed by Christ become testimonies to others. The wise men did not preach sermons, but their obedience preached louder than words.

Christmas joy must be released through worshipful living, sacrificial love, and faithful obedience.

- The journey of the wise men teaches us that Christmas joy is not shallow or sentimental. It is revealed to seekers, refined through perseverance, received in Christ's presence, and released through transformed lives.
- The same Christ they worshiped is present today. The same joy they experienced is available now.
- This Christmas, do not settle for tradition without transformation. Seek Jesus sincerely. Worship Him wholeheartedly. Follow Him obediently.
- Joy to the world, the Lord has come.

MISSIONARY STORY: THE JOY THAT CHANGED A TRIBE

One of the most powerful examples of joy being released through obedience comes from the life of **missionary John Paton**, who served in the New Hebrides Islands in the 1800s. When Paton arrived, the islands were known for violence, cannibalism, and deep spiritual darkness. Many missionaries before him had been killed.

From a human perspective, this was not a joyful assignment. It was dangerous, lonely, and filled with suffering. Shortly after arriving, Paton lost his wife and infant child to illness. He buried them with his own hands. Human joy would have ended there.

But Paton later wrote that in his darkest moments, the presence of Christ was more real to him than ever before. He said that the joy of knowing Jesus sustained him when nothing else could.

Years later, after many trials, the gospel began to take root among the people. One day, Paton was translating the Bible into the local language and came to the verse, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." The local people had no word for "faith" or "trust."

So Paton asked them, "What do you say when you sit down completely and rest your whole weight on a chair?"

They replied with a word meaning, *"to lean your whole body upon."*

Paton realized this was the perfect word. Faith meant leaning the full weight of one's life on Christ. When the people understood this, many believed. Lives changed. Violence stopped. Families were transformed.

Joy entered a place once ruled by fear.

Paton later reflected that the joy he experienced in seeing lives transformed far outweighed every hardship he endured. The joy of Christ was not only received, but it was also released into a dark world.

May the LORD Bless you all.