

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTMAS

“Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid”, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Luke 2:4-14

When the Angel announced the birth of the Savior to shepherds they were told to not be afraid! **This instruction is repeated in the Bible more than any other: do not be afraid.** This was a tender, merciful directive for them, and it is for you and I today as well! Joy is a powerful antidote to fear. The angels' announcement to the shepherds was one of great joy.

Take a moment to ponder the angels' glorious proclamation to the shepherds. We should never lose sight of how amazing the good news of the gospel is, especially today amidst chaos in our society. During this busy season, place your focus back to His presence.

Emmanuel, God is with us. “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders. And His name will be called wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal father, Prince of Peace.” **Isaiah 9:6.** Emmanuel, God with you at all times. This promise provides a solid foundation for joy. Jesus will show us the way of life, for in His presence is fullness of joy. **His miraculous incarnation, the essence of Christmas, was a gift of infinite value. “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14)**

Let us not allow the familiarity of this miracle to dull its effect. Recognize that He is the gift above all gifts. Recall the events from the perspective of the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks at night. They witnessed first the angel and then a multitude of them lighting up the sky proclaiming “glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.”

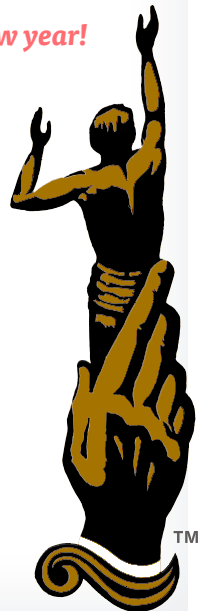
When you celebrate the wonder of His birth in Bethlehem, celebrate also, your rebirth. His everlasting gift of Salvation was the sole purpose of His coming. Receive the gift, discover His love for you and let the God of Peace rule in your heart. During the season of buying and opening presents, remember that the ultimate gift is eternal life.

No matter how challenging life may be, remember that Jesus has prepared a place for us. As we approach the end of this year, take time to reflect, and also to look ahead. Review the highlights of the year; the hard times as well as the good times. Jesus is the companion who will never leave us and He is the guide who knows the way ahead of us. You can have joy and encounter hope as it overflows in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Merry Christmas and a joyous Happy New year!

With Love,

Pastor Jann
and the Staff *& Sue Butler*
at By His Word Christian Center



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