

Speaker: Pastor Hurmon Hamilton

## LIVING A LIFE OF JOY PT.2: SLOW DOWN!

Scripture used: Luke 2:8-12, 17-20 (NIV)

### OVERVIEW

**Big Idea:** You can live a life of joy—if you live in awareness of God’s power and love around you.

In part one of the “Living a Life of Joy” series, we learned that there are two Christmases and that we experience them at the same time. One is the “sacred Christmas” where the focus is on Jesus, and the other is the “civic Christmas” where the focus is on themes of the “sacred Christmas,” such as light, generosity, and time spent with family. The “civic Christmas” encourages us to speed up our lives and invites us into the hustle and bustle of shopping, getting the best sale we can, and attend multiple parties. The “sacred Christmas” invites us to slow down, and to stop and wait to be overtaken by the gift and wonder that is the birth of Jesus Christ.

The “civic Christmas” unintentionally makes false promises about happiness and joy. Simply observe the commercials and billboards that state, “if you acquire this \_\_\_\_\_, you’ll be happy!” On the very first Christmas, no one was “doing” Christmas. Christmas overtook them. The “sacred Christmas” shows us that happiness doesn’t come from what we acquire, but from who we acquired: Christ Jesus Himself.

### KEY POINTS

#### 1) *Joy is a byproduct of:*

- a. **Seeing the wonder of the awesomeness around you.** “The glory of the Lord shone around them,” (v.9). As children, we see wonders everywhere— bright lights, beautiful colors of the sky at sunrise or sunset, and even in crumpled Christmas wrapping paper. However, we often grow up and leave that sense of wonder behind. The only thing that ends up registering with us is the brokenness of life.
- b. **Hearing some good news.** “Do not be afraid; I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people,” (v.10-11) Many of us carry some good news with us that we might not know about. In this hectic world, it would be easy to miss the goodness of God that has gone unnoticed in our lives and in the lives around us.
- c. **Experiencing grace.** “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told,” (v.20). When we take a moment to see and hear all that we have missed, we experience the grace of God. He is in and involved in the details of our lives!

#### 2) ***Slow down in the midst of high activity. Pay attention!*** Create margin in your life to slow the pace down. Turn off the t.v. or go for a walk. Take a full lunch break without the distraction of technology and just breathe deep, slow breaths.

#### 3) ***Stop: Create space to be overtaken***

- a. ***Observe what you’re seeing:*** Many of us see, but we do not observe. Don’t just look at the sunrise, notice how many colors there are and how quickly those colors change as it rises.
- b. ***Savor what you’re experiencing:*** “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart,” (v.19). To savor is to become one with the experience. Take some time to think about God’s goodness in your life and in the lives around you.
- c. ***Share what you’re discovering:*** Your own good news can be a reminder of God’s goodness for someone else. We will not experience full joy unless we learn to share the joy with others.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Slow down! Pay attention! What are some ways that currently make room for God in your life? What are some ways that you are willing to make room for Him between now and Christmas?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Read Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 2:8-20. What do you notice that is common for both Mary and the shepherds when they encounter angels? How is Jesus referred to in these passages? How is this good news for you personally? What is your reaction to this good news?
- 3) **DO** - This week, slow down, pay attention, stop, and create space to be overtaken by God’s goodness. Make a list of what you observe as you savor your experience. Be prepared to share with your group the following week.