

REV. TODD HOEFFS
CHRISTMAS EVE 2021
St Luke 2
"A Weary World REJOICES!"
December 24, 2021 + 7 & 10 PM

"Fear not. Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be for all people"

Christmas night.

A weary world waited for a very long time.

The arrival of Jesus Christ, God's Son.

It didn't just happen; Christmas was arranged.

Jesus wasn't just born,

and celebrated every year with manger scenes,

decorations and gift giving.

Jesus was *sent* into our weary world

as the greatest and most amazing display of God's love

for the benefit of all living things--

and this loving gift holds the greatest and most amazing hope

for everyone & everything.

God had been very busy

setting the stage for the completion of His birth plan

for making peace with all of humanity.

Even though it looked like God had forgotten,

He orchestrated things for good.

Many gave up thinking a Saviour would ever come.

The weary world grew tired and lonely.

Much like Mary and Joseph.

An unlikely pair joined not by passion but by divine blessing--

travelling long and late to Bethlehem, Joseph's home city, to pay tax.

Listening to the innkeeper claim there's no room for them.

Sharing a labour and delivery room with cows and donkeys.

No medicine, no midwife, no comforts

Just the comfort of joy.

Joy in a new little life.

A newborn baby.

God's baby.

A gift all wrapped up in baby screams and an exhausted young mother.

God's ancient promise is complete.

The waiting is over.

In the city of David the WORLD'S GIFT is born.

Sometimes gifts appear in the most unusual ways.

Our God has a wonderful way of dismantling our expectations
of what a gift should be or look like.

He always makes happen exactly what we really need.

And its only when we begin to see all that comes form God as a gift

That our soul feels its worth because our faith in assured.

This is not earned or deserved.

It is pure unconditional love.

"A thrill of hope ---

the weary world rejoices."

This is so good to hear because we're still walking in a weary world.

Some of us are drained

We might not always have the strength

to even see the gift God's handing us.

We're surrounded by isolation.

Brokenness.

Grief.

Emptiness.

Bitterness.

Depression.

We are all *weary*.

It seems this time of year
magnifies the awareness
of the weary world in which we live.

There is a deep hunger for human connection

While at the same time fear over how it should happen.

We need to learn all over again how to have hope **and rejoice!**

We've spent years trying to stay on an even keel.

Don't rejoice too much in the good times,

Or the joy will evaporate.

Don't allow yourself to feel too much of the difficult.

Or the hard times never leave.

This gives us the false reality

That when we control how we feel,

We could control what occurs in our own homes.

By pushing away the hard or good, we long to protect ourselves.

And protection is really God's job.

We need His protection more than ever --

Only help from outside of our own selves will be any real help.

God's help is the kind that inspires our faith, which inspires our rejoicing!

He instills a new outlook, a new and lively awareness,

A new way of seeing

that no matter what life brings,

We are safe

And protected

and have joy

because we have Christ.

Mary and Joseph had only a message from angel Gabriel

And the reassurance not to worry.

Shepherds in the field under a deep dark sky

Had only their sheep and their own isolation.....

They get knocked off their feet

by the entire Heavenly Host of angels.

God has a powerful way of getting His message out.

What else could move shepherds to rejoice!

Being swept up into the magnitude of angelic voices

brings rejoicing [after the fright].

Out of nowhere,

the greatest news in human history is spoken:

"Fear not, for behold,

I bring you glad tidings of great joy

that will be for all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David,

a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."(Luke 2:10-11).

Great Joy [MEGA CHARA] – Literally speaking –

Large scale supreme calming delight!

When God moves Heaven down to earth its mega joy!

There's been nothing like this ever!

Bigger than a party.

Better than a vacation.

More important than winning the lottery.

For all those things begin and end.

Mega joy is forever.

It's like hearing for the very 1st time

You are unconditionally loved.

isn't that a calming delight

believing you are unconditionally, totally and completely LOVED.

This great joy fills our rejoicing.

This great joy creates a manger out of our hearts

Where the Christ child lives and grows

and keeps us in this same calm peaceful contented delight—

because the shepherds rejoiced and told and the message is out.

Jesus is a great gift opened up every time we live in hope.

God did the work.

And even created signs to frame this big news.

God didn't expect the shepherds or anyone

To just blindly trust these glad tidings.

Look at the wrappings.

swaddling clothes,

Which by the way, are torn strips of cloth

usually wrapped around a dead baby's body.

Let that take root.

A baby who's born to die.

The clothes cuddle up baby Jesus as He lies in a manger,

Which is a feeding trough for barn animals.

A baby for which the world has waited so long

is overshadowed with death

but from these deadly shadows

our baby Saviour will feed countless crowds

welcoming everyone around His manger for His bread of life.

For this the weary world rejoices.

That's the secret to rejoicing.

Only God can inspire rejoicing in the face of weariness.

A Holly Jolly Christmas has its place.

We long for carefree celebrations.

Christmas spirit might be waning this year.
But it doesn't need to.
With faith and trust looking into hope --
We can protect life so long as we never lose the ability to live.
To live in the promise
That our God keeps hope going when we can't.
So when we feel the weight of the weary world,
we rejoice in the Truth.
Regardless of what we've been through,
And no matter what we have to face this new year,
All is forgiven,
All is at peace.
All is calm--
And all is made new.
All is unconditionally loved.
You are images of Jesus' peace and joy that you seek.
You no longer dread the future, but live in hope.
Instead of settling for occasional happiness,
You have a great joy that fills your daily strength.
You are part of something greater than just yourselves.
As long as hope lives, you and I and everything can rejoice.
—especially -- in a weary world.
Amen.

