

Sermon: Joy To Humanity

Text:

Discussion Questions:

- Read the account of the angel's appearance to the shepherds in **Luke 2:8-14**.
 - Begin by discussing what it would have been like to have been a shepherd at the time of Christ's birth. These were people who LIVED out in the fields tending a flock of sheep. They are constantly on the move seeking out new pastures for their sheep to feed in. What are some words you might use to describe their life. Where did they "sit" on the social status spectrum? Why do you think God chose them to appear to?
 - Re-live the moment that the angel appeared in the night sky to the shepherds. Perhaps we can imagine the brightest, most powerful spotlight that all at once began to shine in their eyes. The text says they were terrified...what do you think might have been going through their minds? How could they possibly believe what the angel was announcing?
 - Take some time to read through verses 10-11 several times. Focus on the phrase, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people." Given our topic this week, think especially of the words, "great joy." What is it about this good news that will bring great joy? Why is this news so joyful? What even is joy? Who can experience this joy? How have YOU experienced the great joy that results from this news? When or why?
- Read **Psalm 98**.
 - Verse 2 states that, "The Lord has made His salvation known and revealed His righteousness to the nations." What does this mean? How has God done this?
 - Verse 3 picks up this theme by stating "all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." Again—what does this mean, and how has God done this?
 - The impact of this salvation is expressed in verses 4-6. What are we called to do in response to God's mercy and salvation?
 - What is the earth's response to God's salvation? (vv. 7-9)
 - What part does joy play in our response? How do we do this? How do we shout for joy?
 - Just over 300 years ago, in England, a man named Issac Watts decided to write a poem about each of the Psalms. But he decided to give each poem a unique twist—he wanted to interpret each psalm in light of how it points to the life of Jesus. Here is the poem he wrote about Psalm 98. Take time to discuss each line of the poem, and how it relates to Psalm 98: *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.*

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness, And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love, And wonders, wonders, of His love.