

# Special Messages from 2016

## Tapping Into the Emotions of Christmas

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning men. Merry Christmas. If you would please open your Bibles to Luke chapter two, verse one. We're going to do a shout out this morning and that shout out will go to the group called, Kingdom Knights, at the Nash Road Free Methodist Church in North Tonawanda, New York, according to Google translate. Five men, they've been meeting for three years there at James Moir's house at 7pm. We're looking for a field rep in your area too, so if one of you men want to do that check it out at [mimfieldstaff.org](http://mimfieldstaff.org). Today we want to welcome these men to our Bible study, so would you join me in giving a very warm Man in the Mirror welcome to Kingdom Knights. One, two, three, ooh rah.

Glad to have you men with us. Thank you. Our message this morning, Tapping into the Emotions of Christmas. My wife and daughter have been having a little email exchange. My daughter came up with the idea, we're having seven family members come in and they'll be at our homes and so forth, that instead of having a lot of Christmas gifts, a lot of things to carry home, why don't we just make a day at Disney, mom and dad's gift to the different families? Patsy says, "Sure, we can do that. We just need to void the 28th because on the 28th we'll be having dinner over at the Mayflower," which is a retirement community where Patsy's parents live and Patsy's two sisters and husbands will be there and then all our family and everything. Our daughter wrote back, she said, "Aw, you mean we're not having dinner at our house?" Patsy wrote back, she said, "Oh my dear daughter, seven wonderful family house guests and then feeding 15 people on top of that, Norman Rockwell has to die." That's the emotions of Christmas at our house this year.

I want us to read the Christmas story. Luke chapter two, verse one, the first 12 verses. "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria." Interesting, governor of Syria, interesting. "And everyone who went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up to the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior is born to you; he is Christ, the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'" May God add His inspiration to this reading of His word.

What is the situation that calls this text into existence? It was a time, they were desperate times, disease and poverty were rampant and hope was frankly in short supply. In many ways the world of that day was very different from the world we live in today, but in many ways, in fact, most of the ways that really matter, the world back then is very similar to the world that we have today. We live in the day when hope is in short supply in many quarters. When we look at this text and we think about Christmas, we think about Christmas being a time of great joy. I was pulling out of my driveway a couple of days ago and a neighbor was out in the yard. I just felt this Christmas spirit welling up inside of me and so I rolled down the window and really with great surprising amount of emotion I wished my neighbor whom I have been watching over the last couple of years as they get settled in, with a great deal of affection and I said out the window, "I hope you have a very merry Christmas." She said back the same way. Also, you could tell with a great deal of feeling more emotion, if you will, than on a normal day.

It is a time of great joy, but Christmas is also a time that magnifies the pain of the human heart. This morning we're going to look at some of these things. First let's start by just talking a little bit about the emotions of Christmas. My daughter is a licensed counselor and she wrote a blog this week. What she does, if I can find it, she works with ... In a neonatal intensive care unit, and what she does as a counselor she counsels the parents, and especially the moms of these young children. She wrote a wonderful blog for them and this is what she wrote, "The holidays do bring great happiness. Family celebrating what we've been given and gifting others, imagining how the world ought to be, the meaningful pause for faith traditions, but the same season highlights the profound loss in these areas as well. Loved ones we've lost, family relationships that are severed or strained, financial stress, the stories we still hear on the news regardless of the time of the year."

She goes on, "It is a sign of health as a human being, not madness, or being a Scrooge, to be able to acknowledge and sit with contradictory emotions. In the very same way we learn to hold both hope and loss is part of the hour-by-hour experience of the NICU," N-I-C-U, neonatal intensive care unit, "We can embrace both as part of the experience of the holidays. Be kind to yourself by expecting to feel a wide variety of emotions and not judging your own ambivalence." Good way to get started on that thought process. Some of the different ways that people are experiencing Christmas this year, in addition to all the ways that people are kind of on top of the world. We had like, as you know, we are in the process of acquiring a headquarters building for Man in the Mirror after 30 years we've never had one, and we've got this building and it's working out really well. We're at about 90% of the money that we need to raise for it, we're in that final push I guess.

Anyway, the point of all that is that we had a big surprise yesterday. David Delk our President and CEO was with the management team and I was at my home office preparing this message and they called me on the phone, on the speaker phone and they were so filled with joy because a person who we were expecting to make a gift of one amount, 10,000 dollars, ended up making a gift of 60,000 dollars. The joy of that, the experience of that ... Talk about a Christmas gift, wow, we were like over the moon and so much joy on that. Then we turned right around and then I'm talking to a guy who is, you can just tell is so angry about Christmas, is so angry about the radical Muslims, and so angry about people saying, "Happy Holidays," instead of, "Merry Christmas." There's this emotional turmoil that's going on.

Some people are struggling for a sense of purpose, some are struggling for a sense of identity, some are struggling for a sense of meaning. Some have a marriage that is teetering on the brink, some have just gone through a divorce, some have had a child go through a divorce this year and their dream of building a family line around the gospel of Jesus is kind of coming unraveled and they're dealing with that this holiday season. Some people have a child who has a very grave illness, some have lost children

this year, some have lost a spouse this year to death, some have discovered they have a health problem this year, or that their spouse or one of their children has a health problem this year with grave consequences. Some people are feeling the emotions of a first job this Christmas, or a lost job, or a stalled career, or a business failure, or a financial crisis. Some people are struggling, "How can I accept the grace and the love of Jesus with the way that I've failed morally this year? I can't forgive myself, how can I expect God to forgive me? I don't feel like I could even be forgiven."

Other people are in a midlife crisis. Some facing their own mortality. There's just so many different kinds of situations that are swirling around us, all around us, in us and all around us this Christmas. There are many emotions that are magnified at Christmas. Christmas is like an amplifier through which we experience the emotions. It brings sharper focus onto the troubles, the pains of our heart at Christmas as well. When we look at this text, this good news of great joy for all people, when we look at this text we ask, "What is the problem that God is trying to solve with Christmas if it's not healing the pain of the human heart?" Because obviously that's not it. God is not in Christmas promising to remove all the pain of the human heart, all of the responses, these emotional responses that we have. What then is the problem that God is trying to solve with Christmas?

It's to bring the hope of great joy, and it's the great joy that He's not going to eliminate our humanity, but He's going to add to it eternity. You see that? The Christmas story is not that He's going to take away our humanity, but He's going to add eternity to it. I was going to use the Möbius strip this morning as an example. I'm sorry I didn't do it now. Anyway, that's when you take a strip of paper and you twist it one half turn, hold it together, and then one piece of paper ends up with only one side. What a trick, and that's the trick of Christmas is that God is taken that dimension of our lives and turned it into a continuous eternal loop. With that said, I want us to take a look now at how this Christmas was first reported. Drop down to verse ten again, "And the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news.'"

Three things I want us to see here. "I bring you good news." There was no gaggle of reporters at the first Holiday Inn there. There was no scrum of paparazzi flashing their pictures. Jesus was born in a town that probably had something like, according to Albright, probably about 300 total people in population. This angel is actually, becomes a reporter, a news reporter and he posts a headline. It's actually in verse 11 the headline is, this would be the headline, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord." That's the headline, that's the headline. We find out something from this text that we would otherwise never know. We find out how the announcement, how the world came to know that Jesus, the Christ has been born. This is it, this is the only place in scripture where we actually hear the account of how this came place. This angel became a newspaper reporter, or, well it was all oral traditions, mostly oral traditions. There were obviously letters from kings to their subjects and so forth around there, but primarily an oral report that we have. That's what's going on.

It's basically the publicity of an obscurity. You see what I'm saying? This was a very obscure event that took place. There are many other more important things, apparently more important things taking place in the Roman Empire at this time, but God decided to create this publicity of the birth of His son. The first thing is, "I bring you news." The second thing is, "Good news of great joy. Good news of great joy. A Savior has been born. We're going to introduce this calculus of eternal hope into the human condition. A Savior is born, he will save the people from his sins." The love of God made flesh to dwell among us. God decided for whatever reason after 400 years of silence to reduce Himself to human flesh so that you and I could comprehend Him better. To introduce His son, His very own son, the one who was the creator at the beginning, the one who is wisdom in the scriptures to unite us with God, to forgive us of our sins and to let us step onto the Möbius strip. This continuous loop of eternal life.

The obvious question is, why is the birth of Jesus such good news of great joy? I think there is something in this text, we see it elsewhere in scripture, but it's so profound, it's so beautiful, and it's so relevant to what you're going through today and what those around you are going through today that we can't miss this. It's the obvious part of this text, it's the most obvious thing about this text. The thing that most likely could be overlooked, but it is the most important thing not to overlook. That's the third thing. The first thing is, "I bring you news." The second thing is, "Good news of great joy." Who's this good news for? It's for who, it says in verse ten, at the end of verse ten? It's "For all the people, all the people." All the Muslims, all the Buddhists, all the Confucians, all the atheists, all the Protestants, all the Catholics, all the Canadians, all the Bolivians, all the central Floridians, it's, "For all the people."

It is the greatest news of all time and what is obvious about this is that this makes Christmas the single most inclusive day of the year. There is no other holiday, there is no other celebration that includes all the people. You think about the American traditions like Thanksgiving, that's just the Americans. Even, maybe the second closest is New Years Eve day or New Years day or something like that, but there ... It's for all the people. It's the most inclusive day of the year. This, this is what makes it such good news of great joy is because it's for all the people. It's for everybody, everybody, no matter what their emotional state, no matter how much joy, no matter how much sorrow, this Christmas is for all the people, everybody. Of all the things that we could say today I believe that the thing that most needs to be said is number one, this is for all the people. Secondly, we now are the reporters. You are now the reporter. You are now standing in the place of the angel. You are now the herald.

You are now the one who has the privilege and the opportunity to say to everybody that you meet, "I have good news for you of great joy, and guess what? It's for you because it's for all the people. It's good news for everyone. It doesn't make any difference how much pain you're in because of your failed romance. It doesn't make any difference how much money you've lost and how much cash flow problem you have. I have some good news for you that will bring great joy into your life as you begin to understand it. By the way, the greater the pain of the human heart, the greater the sense of joy when you understand the solutions that will lead you." The Big Idea today is going to be this, **we are now the ones reporting the good news of great joy for all the people.** We are now the ones doing the reporting.

When I was talking to three guys this week and one guy said, he said, "Merry Christmas. Am I allowed to say, Merry Christmas?" The other two gentlemen started into a conversation, but it was all about lipstick and rouge. It was all about things that don't really matter. It was about political correctness, it was about talking about being upset about people saying, "Happy Holidays," instead of saying, "Merry Christmas." Who cares what people say? That's not the point. The point is it says there's some good news out there that brings great joy and it's for all the people, and we get to report on it. Brothers, brothers, do not, do not allow yourself to devolve into a discussion about whether you should be saying, "Happy Holidays," or "Merry Christmas." Instead when they say, when you see that conversation going on, "Well guess what? I don't know about that, but I've got some good news that can bring great joy because Jesus is for all the people, even the people that say, 'Happy Holidays.'"

It can be a great Christmas, it can be a great Christmas because we're the reporters now, we're the reporters now, you and me. What do we need to understand in order to be an effective reporter? We need to understand what the angel understood. That it doesn't make any difference how much pain you are in emotionally these holidays, or the people around you, how much pain that they're in, this pain of the human heart, this emotional pain. It does not matter how much pain there is, what we must understand is that God has either sovereignly caused or allowed that pain, but whether causing it or allowing it, He is most certainly orchestrating all human events. Secondly, He's doing this for good

purposes. "He is working out everything in conformity with a purpose of His will," Ephesians 1, verse 11. Because, whether He causes or allows these situations and sometimes He causes it, sometimes He allows it, He is orchestrating it and He's orchestrating it to bring about a good end, and because He's good, we can trust Him.

We have a message of good news with great joy that we can bring to people that Jesus Christ wants to heal their broken heart. Jesus Christ wants to heal your sin. Whatever you have done that got you into this situation, no matter how egregious the sin, Jesus is for you, he's for all the people. He wants to forgive your sin, no matter how egregious this error in judgement. Maybe it's not a sin, but no matter how egregious this error in judgement has been that has cost you your life savings or whatever it is, God is in control, God is sovereign, God is orchestrating all human events. He will work this for your good and in that, in putting our faith in the goodness of Jesus, we could have great joy and it's not just for other people, it's for you because it's for all the people, it's for all the people. Then when we have this, we have the perspective of, watch this, we have the perspective of, watch this, we have the perspective of a disciple making disciple. That's what you want to be, brothers. You want to be a disciple making disciple. You want to be a disciple of Jesus and that implies, and all the benefits there of.

You're the reporter now. We're the reporters, so we want to be disciple making disciples as well. This is the greatest privilege, this is the greatest privilege that a Christian could have on a day-to-day basis, is to be a disciple making disciple. Today when you see a neighbor, or a coworker, or a stranger and you feel that Christmas spirit welling up inside you, go ahead, let it out, however it comes out. Maybe it's, "Merry Christmas," or maybe it's, "Hey, Jesus loves you," or, "Hey, isn't God good?," or however you say it, but we're the reporters now. We're the ones that Jesus is looking to, given the privilege to of saying, "I have some good news of great joy for all the people." That's the Big Idea. **We are now the ones reporting this good news of great joy for all the people.** Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas.

Let's pray. Our Father, the Father of Christmas, the Father of the mass of Christ, we celebrate the mass of Christ, the advent of the Savior, and Lord we pray that we would experience you in our emotions. That we would rest in the sadness and the joy of the season, the ambivalence where it exists and that we also would be the reporters who share how this wonderful news, how this wonderful news can bring great joy to every single people, all the people. We ask this in your name, Jesus, the little baby Jesus, and everybody said ... Amen.