

# Christmas Joy

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 30 November 2025

Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, this Christmas we are starting a new series in the Bible looking at the early chapters of Luke's Gospel all about the birth of Jesus and in particular we're looking at the songs of Christmas from Luke.

And so today's reading is Luke chapter 1 verse 26 to 45. The words are up on the screen but do pick up a Bible in the seats in front and turn to Luke chapter 1 and we're reading from verse 26 and then through to 45.

This is the Word of God. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son and you are to call him Jesus.

[ 1 : 26 ] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever.

His kingdom will never end. How will this be? Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin. The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come on you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age. And she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail. I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. May your word to me be fulfilled. Then the angel left her.

At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb.

[ 2 : 40 ] And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.

But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her. Amen.

Let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at these verses together. Father, thank you, our God, for your word. We thank you for how it points us to your son, the Lord Jesus.

And we thank you for these details that even before he was born, we read about him and the impact he made on people's lives. And so today we pray that by your spirit, the Lord Jesus would impact us as we consider his coming.

[ 3 : 45 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, everywhere you go these days, Christmas music is playing. I think it's been playing in the shops since about August.

And it's just endless Christmas music everywhere. So I checked out some Christmas music on Spotify, the music streaming platform. And there are loads and loads of Christmas playlists. Here are just a few. The 100 greatest Christmas songs ever. The best Christmas music playlist 2025. All the best Christmas music ever.

And a whole load of other, about 100 playlists, that contain the words best ever Christmas music. But I wonder if you know what the top streaming Christmas song is.

Anyone know? Top streaming Christmas song. Yes, All I Want for Christmas Is You by Mariah Carey.

[ 4 : 44 ] Not a great song, let's be honest. But for some odd reason, it is the most streamed Christmas song. And apparently, the most streamed Christmas song of all time.

Mariah Carey must be raking it in with all the royalties from her song. So what is it about Christmas music? Why do people love listening to Christmas music?

If it's not the pop kind of Christmas music, your style might be more classical Christmas music. But you just love listening to Christmas music. The pop stuff is cheesy. It lacks lyrical quality.

It can be soppy. It can be sentimental. And yet we still love it. At least some of it. But why is this? Well, perhaps it's because the Christmas songs and Christmas music give some kind of expression to the longing that is within all of our hearts.

Because deep down, what do we long for? Well, we long for love. We long for joy. We long for peace. We long for hope. And that's basically what the Christmas songs promise to us in one way or another.

[ 5 : 50 ] And of course, it's never wrong to desire all of these things because it's actually how we are wired as human beings. We long for joy, peace, hope, love.

We want these things. We feel we're never satisfied until we have them. And yet what we find is that no matter how hard we try, we always fail to be satisfied if we look for love, joy, peace, hope in the wrong places.

And that's why the true message of Christmas really is good news for you and me and for our world because it tells us that our deepest longings for joy, for peace, for love, for hope, they can find satisfaction.

Where? In the person of Jesus Christ. So as we approach Christmas, we're going to look at the very first songs of Christmas. Songs that were sung for the birth of Jesus.

Songs that sing of the Savior, the Savior who truly satisfies the deepest longings of the human heart. And we discover them in the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

[ 6 : 57 ] Now, if you don't know the Bible or are familiar with Christianity, Luke is one of the four historical accounts of the life of Jesus in the Bible. And one of the fascinating features about Luke's story is the way that he weaves into the narrative of Jesus' birth the songs of Christmas.

He records the original and the best Christmas songs. And he gives us a classic Christmas playlist because he wants us to listen to these songs.

They're top songs and they were sung by ordinary people whose lives were changed in extraordinary ways because of the message of Christmas. And so Luke's classic Christmas playlist. In it, we see five songs. So if you've got your Bible open, just have a quick glance down at these songs. First of all, there's Elizabeth's song. And it's a song of joy. Luke 1, 39 to 45.

Secondly, there's Mary's song. The Magnificat. Luke 1, 46 to 55. And it's a song of faith. Then thirdly, there's Zechariah's song.

[ 8 : 05 ] The Benedictus, it's called in Latin. Luke 1, 57 to 79. And it's a song of hope. And then there's the angel song. The Gloria in excelsis.

And that's Luke 2, verse 1 to 20. And it's a song of peace. You see it there, chapter 2, verse 14. And then fifthly, there's Simeon's song. The Nuke Dimittis.

It's his Latin name. That's Luke 2, 22 to 38. And it is a song of salvation. And so you notice that these songs are sung before and during and after the birth of Jesus.

And their lyrics are rich, deep lyrics that come from the Old Testament scriptures. Because they're promising that a Savior is coming and they are proclaiming his birth to us.

And they're an expression of God's great salvation plan, which we read from cover to cover in the Bible. And so whether you'd call yourself a Christian or not, Luke's songs for Christmas aren't just supposed to be background music that plays while we just get on with the rest of our lives.

[ 9 : 15 ] Because when we hear their lyrics and when we respond to their message, they will set our hearts to a different beat. And we discover how they will change the tune of our lives forever.

And so the first Christmas song that we're going to look at today comes from Elizabeth. Verse 39 to 45 of Luke chapter 1. Who is Elizabeth? Well, Elizabeth was the elderly mother of John the Baptist. And her song is so easily overlooked because it's the shortest one recorded for us in these list of songs. And yet Elizabeth's song is bursting with Christmas joy.

And so we see how in her song, the coming of Jesus gives three things. It gives extraordinary joy. It gives ultimate joy. And it gives personal joy.

And so let's look at these three points together. First of all, extraordinary joy. Verse 41 and 44. That's the first thing we should notice in these verses. Now this extraordinary joy doesn't just come from Elizabeth.

[10:22] You'll notice from the passage that comes from the baby in Elizabeth's womb. And so the back story is that an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, who was married to Elizabeth.

And the angel told Zechariah that Elizabeth, now remember they were both really old people, but Elizabeth would have a son. And he was to be called John.

And John would be the one who would prepare the way for Jesus. But Zechariah, he didn't believe the angel's words because he and Elizabeth were past childbearing age.

But it's supernatural. Elizabeth becomes pregnant with John just as the angel Gabriel had said. And so next, the angel Gabriel goes to the Virgin Mary.

And Mary was told, you know this from a reading, that she would give birth to a son and he would be called Jesus. And he is the son of God. And so next, Mary's told that her relative Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy.

[11:28] And so we pick up the story, verse 39, with Mary hurrying off to visit her elderly relative Elizabeth. And that's the encounter that I'd like us to focus on this afternoon.

So look at verse 41. Luke tells us, So this meeting between the women results in extraordinary joy. Not just because Mary greets Elizabeth, but because Elizabeth's baby greets Mary's baby. Now Luke doesn't tell us how Elizabeth knew Mary was pregnant.

There's no indication that Mary told Elizabeth beforehand she couldn't send her an ultrasound scan picture on the WhatsApp chat that they had like people do today. And so it's likely that it has to do with Elizabeth being filled with the Holy Spirit.

But not only was Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth's baby was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Because earlier, in Luke chapter 1, verse 15, we're told that John, John the Baptist, would be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born.

[12:45] And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. And so it's John's antenatal experience of the Spirit that prompts his response in the womb.

And it's an expression of extraordinary joy. So Elizabeth later declares this in her own words in verse 44. As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

So even before Elizabeth gets a chance to respond to Mary, her unborn child leaves for joy in the womb. John the Baptist is literally jumping for joy.

Now, if you've got children, you know that all children enjoy a good play date. Interesting, one of the commentators suggests that this is the closest that you can get to a play date in the womb.

As these two unborn babies connect with each other. And it's amazing. Now, if you know John the Baptist's role and purpose, he was to prepare the way for Jesus.

[13:50] That was his public ministry. John the Baptist's job was to point people to Jesus. And it's interesting that he starts his job in the womb. John jumps for joy and Elizabeth sings for joy when he encounters Jesus.

And at Christmas time, there's pantos and there's singing and dancing and joy. But this is no Christmas panto here. And so if you're curious about Christianity, or if you've never heard all of this before, then you'd be right to think that this isn't normal.

This doesn't usually happen. But we shouldn't be surprised at the miraculous events surrounding the birth of Jesus. It is, after all, an earth-shattering event.

That God, the eternal God, comes into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. It's not a normal thing. It is going to be supernatural.

God, the Most High, is sending his Son to earth. And that's why we've got this supernatural conception of Jesus to the Virgin Mary.

[15:00] But we're not talking here in the realm of fantasy. This isn't once-upon-a-time kind of stuff. This is the time by which we actually set our time.

The most significant moment in the history of our world. Because when Luke is writing here, he's writing as a historian. And so the opening words of his gospel, Luke 1, 1-4, he makes it clear that he is reporting the facts of what actually took place, what happened.

And so Luke has gone to the primary sources, if you like, to the eyewitnesses. And he has investigated everything carefully from the very beginning. So he can present.

Actually, he can present to his friend Theophilus, who he's writing to. And we, by extension, can read Luke's words. Luke wants to write an orderly account for his friend and for us.

So that we can know with absolute certainty that everything that he says to us about Jesus is true and can be trusted. From his birth, throughout his life, to his death on the cross, and then to his resurrection from the dead.

[16:16] But interestingly, as well as being a really careful historian, Luke is also a really competent doctor. He's often called Dr. Luke.

And so if there's anyone in the ancient world that you would like to report on a pregnancy, or two women who are pregnant, then Luke is your man. And that's why we can be sure that what he says about these two pregnant women isn't just reported with careful historical accuracy, but also with considered medical knowledge.

Because he knows what he is talking about. And that's why the extraordinary joy of John leaping in his mother's womb is recorded for our benefit. To help us see that John's joy at Jesus coming near is true Christmas joy.

And this true Christmas joy can be our joy too when we encounter Jesus. So let's look further at the reason for this joy.

So that's the extraordinary joy. Secondly, the ultimate joy. The reason for this ultimate joy is expressed in Elizabeth's song.

[17:29] And so Luke tells us, look down to verse 42 and 43. In a loud voice, she exclaimed, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.

But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Now this is Elizabeth's song. And it is a song of joyful praise.

And that's why she cries out in a loud voice. Firstly, by saying, blessed are you among women. Now this has got the sense of among all women, Mary, among all women, you are the most blessed.

Now to be blessed means to receive special favor from God. And Mary is especially blessed because of the child that she carries.

Which is the second part of Elizabeth's song. She says, blessed is the child you will bear. The child is blessed because of who he is. God coming incarnate in flesh.

[18:32] And because of what he came to do. Because this child is at the very center of God's plan for the world. The reason for human history.

And Elizabeth's aware of this because notice what she says. She says, but why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Elizabeth knew the identity of Mary's unborn son.

She called him my Lord. And we shouldn't miss the significance of her words. Because she is clearly declaring this child in Mary to be the long promised Messiah.

The one all of the Old Testament scriptures are pointing towards. And so her words allude actually to one of the Psalms about the Messiah. Psalm 110.

It's the Psalm of David. But it starts with these words. The Lord said, To my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

[19:38] When you see that Psalm 110, you notice that David speaks about two lords. One is the Lord God. And the other is the Messiah.

Whom David calls my Lord. And what does Elizabeth say? My Lord. So it's talking about Jesus and prophesying that Jesus is the Lord who sits at the right hand of the Lord God.

And here's Elizabeth saying that Jesus is her Lord. Jesus himself applied these words from Psalm 110 to himself later in the Gospels.

But this is Elizabeth confessing her faith. She is actually the first person in this Gospel to call Jesus Lord. He's arrived as a baby in the womb.

And Elizabeth is conscious that she is in the presence of the divine Son of God. Her Lord has come to her.

[20:44] That's Christmas in a nutshell, isn't it? Her Lord, our Lord has come to us. No wonder she sings for joy. Because she recognizes that she's got this front row seat.

As she watches the great salvation plan of God unfold before her very eyes. As the Lord of all eternity is about to break into the world that he made.

And so Christmas brings ultimate joy because the Lord Jesus Christ has come to us. And his name, Jesus, comes from the name Joshua, Yeshua in Hebrew.

And it means the Lord saves. Or the Lord is my salvation. And that's the reason for Elizabeth's joy. She recognizes that in this unborn child is the hope for the whole world.

And when we realize who entered into our world on that very first Christmas. And why he came. Then we discover the source of ultimate joy.

[ 21 : 55 ] And ultimate peace. And ultimate satisfaction for our lives. You know, I love the way that Thomas Watson, who's one of the Puritan preachers, expresses this.

Listen to what he says. And I quote, He was born of a virgin that we might be born of God.

He took our flesh that he might give us his spirit. He lay in the manger that we might lie in paradise. He came down from heaven that he might bring us to heaven.

And what was all this but love? Behold, here a sacred riddle or paradox. God manifest in the flesh. That man should be made in God's image was a wonder.

But that God should be made in man's image is a greater wonder. That the ancient of days should be born. That he who thunders in the heavens should cry in the cradle.

[ 22 : 55 ] That he who rules the stars should suck the breast. That a virgin should conceive. That Christ should be made of a woman and of that woman which he himself made.

That the branch should bear the vine. That the mother should be younger than the child she bear. And the child in the womb bigger than the mother.

That the human nature should not be God, yet one with God. Christ taking flesh is a mystery we shall never fully understand till we come to heaven.

And that's the end of his quote. That's why Jesus alone is the ultimate source of joy for our lives. Because he came out of love for us.

And that's why we'll never find ultimate joy in life until we grasp the love that God has for us. And that's not to say, of course, that we can't find joy in other things.

[ 24 : 01 ] We can and we do. But just take Elizabeth as an example. What state is Elizabeth in? Elizabeth is pregnant and she is going to have a baby. And having a baby is a cause for great joy, isn't it?

But Elizabeth knew that ultimate joy, lasting joy, true joy, real joy, wasn't found in having a baby. But in the baby who was her Lord. And so as we close, our final point, how do we get this ultimate joy for ourselves?

It's extraordinary joy. It's ultimate joy. But how can it be our personal joy? How can we know and experience personal joy in the way that Elizabeth and Mary did?

The answer to that question is simple. It is by believing. By believing. See what Elizabeth said about Mary, verse 45.

[ 25 : 04 ] Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her. Elizabeth pays tribute to Mary's faith.

Mary believed God would fulfill his promises to her. In other words, she trusted that God would do absolutely everything that he said he would do. And so she shows the right response to the coming of Jesus, which is to believe.

And interestingly, Mary's belief is in contrast to the doubt that Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, displayed. Zechariah was struck dumb because of his unbelief.

He was rebuked for failing to believe God will fulfill his promises to him. That's why the angel Gabriel said to Zechariah in chapter 1, verse 20, And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.

And so in contrast to Zechariah's unbelief, Mary's belief is held up for us. Because that is what is needed. And that's why Elizabeth's song concludes by saying Mary is blessed by believing God's word to her.

[ 26 : 26 ] And that's the application of all of this for us. If we are to experience real joy, true joy, lasting joy, the joy of Christmas, we must believe all that God says about his son Jesus, just like Mary did.

That is the only proper response to the message of Christmas. Today, I guess many people say they could never believe in Jesus Christ.

It's just too difficult. They've got so many questions, so many doubts. It's just impossible to believe. And you might know people who are like that.

In fact, you may even be one of those people where, well, yeah, you're curious, but you're also skeptical. I mean, how can anyone believe in the virgin birth? Sounds far too fetched in today's scientific advanced world, doesn't it? Far too difficult to believe. But wait a minute. What about Mary?

[ 27 : 35 ] Do you know, the virgin birth was just as inconceivable for Mary to believe as it is for people today. And yet Mary believed what God said, even if she couldn't fully grasp how.

And it wasn't very easy for Mary. Just think about it. By believing God's promises, Mary had to commit herself fully to God, to be all in with God's plan for her and everything that it meant. And she said there in verse 38, I am the Lord's servant. May your word be, sorry, may your word to me be fulfilled. Mary's saying, do whatever you want with my life, Lord.

She was prepared to give up everything for God. Remember, Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, verse 27. And in Matthew's account, Joseph thought about divorcing Mary.

That was his plan until an angel said to Joseph, no, don't divorce her. And so Mary's belief was costly. It meant being prepared to be that unmarried teenage mother.

[ 28 : 49 ] A huge scandal back then. And believing and following through on that belief would impact Mary's reputation. She was risking being labeled as that one with the illegitimate child.

And that's what happened. They spoke about Jesus as if they didn't know who his father was. Imagine how Mary felt. And so however Mary's life would turn out, we know, but she didn't at this point.

Misunderstanding, disgrace, shame, all the rest of it. Mary believed that God would fulfill his promises to her. And Elizabeth assures her that she would be blessed because of it.

And so when you consider Mary's willingness to believe with all of this backstory, all of this going on, then it kind of makes our excuses for not believing really weak and poor, doesn't it?

And so it's as we take God at his word and believe what he says about his son and believe in his son that we truly experience joy.

[ 30 : 04 ] And that's what this lovely encounter between these two pregnant women shows us. They experience the joy of being caught up in God's story, in God's plan and in God's purpose for what he was doing in this world.

And you know, we too can experience ultimate Christmas joy and also be caught up in God's story, in God's plan for what he is doing in this world, despite living 2,000 years after the things we're talking about.

Because when we believe all that God has revealed about Jesus, we're caught up in God's purposes. When we confess our faith in Jesus by calling him, my Lord, then we're bowing to his rule.

And we're becoming part of his everlasting kingdom. And it causes our hearts to leap for joy and our lips to cry out in praise because Jesus has come to us.

And Jesus has come for us. The Lord Jesus left his throne in heaven to enter the womb of a young virgin in Nazareth, becoming a man so he could die on a cross to save us.

[ 31 : 21 ] So this baby that was laid out in a crude wooden box became the savior who was laid out on a cruel wooden cross. But if you don't believe all that God has revealed to us about Jesus, then can I just encourage you to apply your mind to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Think about it. Or even better, believe. Open your heart. And discover that ultimate personal joy can only be found in him, in Jesus.

It's what you've been longing for your whole life, even if you've never realized it. So don't miss out on the joy that Jesus brings. True Christmas joy.

Let's pray.