

# The Joyful Kingdom

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill toward those on whom His favour rests (Luke 2:14).*

The angels rejoiced when Jesus was born. In an ecstasy of praise, they proclaimed what had long been prophesied and promised: the birth of Jesus, the Christ who takes away all of the world's sin and brokenness. The miraculous birth of this tiny Child is a pivot point in history, long expected yet surprising and new, changing our relationship with God forever. With the angels, the shepherds and magi, we respond with wonder and delight.



The joyfully celebrated birth of Jesus marks a new phase of God's kingdom plan, which was so central to Jesus' teaching. This kingdom proclaimed by Jesus reveals God's eternal plan of salvation and asserts God's sovereignty over all creation, while at the same time overturning false ideas that the kingdom is about gaining worldly power. Instead, Jesus tells us about a kingdom that is both now and not yet, fully and mysteriously spiritual and yet made real in our daily lives through justice and love. This is a kingdom where Jesus calls us to care for and defend the widows and orphans, the poor, the vulnerable. Jesus asks us to live out His righteousness in the world through love. Following Jesus, we enter into the pain and suffering of the world to bring the good news of Jesus Himself to the poor in spirit and body.

For many of us, this can feel like a heavy, sobering burden, as the world has many sorrows. Wars and strife, refugee crises around the world, homelessness and poverty, massive environmental problems, broken relationships with aboriginal peoples: the list is long and the scale of challenges is immense. Yet in this Christmas season of gladness, it is good to remember that God's kingdom is a kingdom of joy. Jesus give us these reminders:

*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Matthew 13:44).*

*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full (John 15:11).*

As we enter into the world's pain to offer the good news of Jesus in word and deed, let us remember to do so with gladness and rejoicing, with hearts full of encouragement and optimism, trusting that God will provide all we need to bring God's love to the world. Let us be "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

This Christmas season — and always — as we remember those who sorrow and who seek justice, may we serve and follow God not only in obedience and diligence, but with the great joy of our Lord.



## What You Can Do

PRAY for God to act to transform the world — and that He will use you as His servant.

SEEK to be open to God's will through prayer, scripture and counsel.

ENCOURAGE one another in doing God's will gladly.

PRACTICE thankfulness in all things.

WATCH for evidence of God's action and intervention in the world.

SERVE God in small things, where you are, instead of being frozen by the bigness of problems facing the world.

VOLUNTEER to meet a need in your community.

JOIN an organization serving people in need to serve them and model God's love.

SMILE more.

OFFER words of blessing and encouragement rather than criticism.

INVITE invite others to join you in serving God within ministries close to your heart.

GIVE generously of your money, time and talents.

INVITE people who are suffering, vulnerable or marginalized to your home.

CALL ATTENTION to positive changes and transformation when you see them occur.

SEEK to see Jesus in everyone.

SHARE the good news of Jesus Christ.



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