**Series Road Map: Evergreen**

**Series Overview:** Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year… right? Well, not for everyone. Though we like to talk about how Christmas is magical, the reality for many is that it’s just a yearly remind of everything they don’t have. Everything they have lost. But it’s not supposed to be like this. Christmas is so much more than a magical celebration, it is a reminder of the single greatest source of joy, peace, and hope the world has ever known. Let’s make this Christmas the most meaningful one yet!

**Week Overview:** Everybody wants to be happy. Problem is, happiness is temporary and circumstantial, so it’s a thirst that will never be quenched. The solution? JOY. Christmas should be an oasis of Joy, regardless of what the rest of your year has looked like. But you won’t find it in the presents, lights, music, or movies. You’ll find it in Jesus himself.

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):** “Best Christmas ever” story… worst Christmas ever…

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** prioritizing joy over happiness

**Text:** Luke 2:8-21 (Luke 2:10)

**THP**: True Joy Endures

**Supporting Points:**

**Application (call to action)**:

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

**Evergreen**

**December 2021**

**Northview Church**

**Script:**

Well Merry Christmas everyone! I know I know, that might be a little premature, but we ARE starting our Christmas series so why not! I want you to think with me back to your all-time favorite Christmas morning. The one that you'll never ever forget! You got it? Okay, let me tell you about mine…

 It was Christmas of 2006. I was in 7th grade and life was pretty dang good. It had been a good Christmas. I had gotten a lot of things I wanted and was feeling very satisfied. We thought all the presents were opened, but out of nowhere my parents told us that there were two more gifts we needed to open. They brought out two small boxes. I couldn't even begin to imagine what else my parents had gotten us, so we tore into the presents immediately to find out. The first present was two ping pong paddles. It was my parent’s way of telling us they bought us a ping pong table to put in our basement! I know for some of you that sounds super lame, but for me and my siblings this was absolutely incredible! Still to this day, we love ping-pong because of that table. The second box was a dog collar. It was their way of telling us that we were finally going to get the family dog we always asked for! We got Adi as a result and she loved our family well for 10 years, and passed away just a few years ago.

 When you think of your favorite Christmas morning, you probably think of it as a joy-filled day, right? Well, I hate to burst your bubble... but it's not... Don't get me wrong, it's a very very HAPPY day, but that's all it is. You see, happiness it dependent on circumstances, and I can promise you that your all-time favorite Christmas morning was also based on circumstances. If you hadn't gotten that specific gift or spent time with those specific people, would it still be your favorite? No. Now, please don't misunderstand where I'm going with this. I'm not trying to say that having a happy Christmas morning is a bad thing. Not at all! What I'm trying to say is that happiness and joy are two very different things.

The Bible makes it very clear that the events we celebrate on Christmas should be a source of joy for us. That means that whether it's the best Christmas ever or the worst Christmas ever, we can still choose to have joy throughout the Christmas season. This is a lot more difficult than it sounds, though. Have you ever had a bad Christmas?

Christmas 2017 was the worst Christmas I've ever experienced. You see, in the week leading up to Christmas I lost one of my best friends. I can still remember it like it was yesterday. It was a Tuesday afternoon. I was working in my office, when I got a call. It was one of those life-changing calls you never expect to get when you actually get it. Someone was calling me to tell me that one of my best friends, Josh… who I had gone to school with since 6th grade... had passed away in his sleep the night before. Josh was only 23 years old. It was completely unexpected and out of the blue. This is the guy who had been my cross country and track teammate for 22 seasons in a row. My middle school, high school and college teammate. The guy who I had countless sleepovers with throughout middle and high school. Gone. Just like that. It was December 19th. Christmas was just six days away. Needless to say, that was a really difficult Christmas. It was not a very happy day.

Maybe you've had a Christmas like that. If you're being completely honest, maybe that's how you expect this Christmas to be. But like I said earlier, the Bible makes it clear that Christmas should be a source of joy for all people. In fact, on the night Jesus was born, the Angels told the shepherds that the news of Jesus’ birth is “good news of great joy that will be for all people”. I truly believe that Christmas couldn't come at a better time of year. It's one of the last things we do before the start of a new year. It's a perfect time to pause, reflect, and reset to start a new year. That's our goal in this year's Christmas series. We want each and every one of you to get the absolute most you can out of this Christmas. We want to go beyond the music, the lights, the food, and the movies. We want to go to something much deeper. How Christmas can be a way of restoring and caring for our souls.

 So how is your soul? Seriously, I want you to think about that question? How close do you feel to God right now? Are you following him every day of your life, or do you just think about him on the weekends? How are you doing emotionally? Are you feeling overwhelmed, lonely, insecure, hopeless, depressed, anxious? Guys, my prayer is that this Christmas is your best Christmas ever. Not because you got everything you wanted… not because you had a really awesome meal or hung out with your family. I want it to be because you connected deeply with Jesus and you reflected on the joy, peace and hope that comes with the Christmas story. You see, Christmas isn't just good because our situations or circumstances are good. Christmas is good because God is good. Christmas is good because it brings good news.

We are calling this year’s Christmas series “Evergreen.” As all of you know, an evergreen tree is the type of tree we use around Christmas time. It makes sense, because it's the only tree this time of year that still has leaves on it. It's a tree specifically designed to be able to withstand the brutal conditions of winter. Let me ask you something... Is your faith in God Evergreen? Is it a faith that could withstand even the most difficult seasons of life? This Christmas season, I want to focus on the three things I believe can help each of us develop an Evergreen faith... Joy, Peace, and Hope.

So let me start by praying for us as we dive deeper into the Christmas story and reflect a little bit on the concept of joy.

(pray)

Let's jump right into the Christmas story, at a part that many of you are probably familiar with. At this point, the angel already appeared to Mary to tell her that she was going to have a baby boy. Jesus has already been born, and the scene suddenly shifts to a field of sheep and Shepherds. It’s dark, boring, quiet, peaceful... But things are about to change dramatically! Check it out…

**(feel free to have students read if you are in a live environment)**

**Luke 2:8-20**

**8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

**13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**14** “Glory to God in the highest heaven,

 and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

**15** When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

**16** So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

 Man, there is a lot of joy in this passage! Do you see it? The Angels showing up out of nowhere and singing praises to God! The Shepherds running to tell everyone they could find that Jesus had been born. That is some powerful joy! Now, you might be thinking, “But wait a minute... You said joy wasn’t dependent on circumstances, and they're all just celebrating because Jesus was born. Isn't that happiness?” I know I just put words in your mouth, but if you actually were thinking this, I'm impressed! It's a great point, and a question we definitely need to answer! Here is the critical difference: This momentary joy made a way for ETERNAL JOY! The celebration that was going on wasn't just because a baby was born, but it was because a promise had been fulfilled. Jesus, the son of God and savior of the world had been born! And this made a way for us to be in right relationship with God again. This didn't just change things for that one day, it changed things for all eternity. God became a man and created a way For us to be in relationship with him forever! Now THAT is a reason for joy! Because nothing can take that away from us!

 You see, **True Joy Endures** (THP). It’s not momentary. It’s not just a feeling based on situations. It is a feeling of contentment and peace regardless of what’s going on around you. It’s choosing to celebrate the promises God has made for your future, even if your current situations tempt you to only focus on the here and now. It’s have a bigger perspective on your life, knowing that God is in control and that he loves you. It’s knowing that God is not a distant God, but that the Christmas story reminds us that he is WITH US. These are all sources of Joy, and nothing can take those truths away from us! That’s why **True Joy Endures**! Joy is a lot like an evergreen tree, while happiness is more like other trees. You see, most trees change with the seasons. In the Summer their leaves are green, in the Fall they are red, yellow, or orange, in Winter they have no leaves at all, and in the Spring their leaves start to bud again. Constantly changing, just like the world we live in and just like our emotions and feelings. Joy, on the other hand, can be consistent. Just like an evergreen tree is green in all four seasons, we can have a faith that chooses joy regardless of what life throws at us. This is a great example of one of those “easier said than done” situations. This is not easy, but it is what can happen when we put our faith in a never-changing, always-faithful God!

 One of the most popular Christmas songs of all time is all about joy. Anyone know which one I'm talking about? You guessed it, “Joy to the World.” You've heard this song a million times, in church, on the radio, from those creepy people that show up at your house to sing at your front door.But have you really thought about the words that you're singing. Let's look at the lyrics a little closer and think about the implications of them…

 [Verse 1]

[Joy to the world, the Lord has come](https://genius.com/Christmas-songs-joy-to-the-world-lyrics#note-17057998)

[Let earth receive her King](https://genius.com/Christmas-songs-joy-to-the-world-lyrics#note-17057998)

Let every heart prepare Him room

And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing

And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

This verse celebrates the fact that Jesus came to be WITH US. Don’t miss how incredible this truth actually is. The God who created absltuely everything out of nothing chose to live among us! What?? That’s crazy! Here’s the next verse:

[Verse 2]

Joy to the world, 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

This verse celebrates the fact that Jesus is in control. Do you every feel like the world is out of control? I know I do! In those moments, there is so much comfort in remembering that Jesus IS in control, even when things are going the way we hoped they would.

[Verse 3]

[He rules the world with truth and grace](https://genius.com/Christmas-songs-joy-to-the-world-lyrics#note-17057856)

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

This verse reemphesizes that fact that Jesus is in control, but it also drives home the truth that he is GOOD. He rules with righteousnes, truth, and grace. And this truth never changes! Waht a comfort and what a source of consistant joy!

 Do you see a theme here? This song is all about celebrating the fact that JESUS SHOWED UP and that Jesus is IN CHARGE ! God himself, in the form of a man, came to be with us. That's a BIG DEAL! Please don't let that truth go in one ear and out the other. The God of the universe, who created all things, who is outside of time and space, came to be with YOU. He wants a relationship with YOU. He did whatever it took so he could have YOU. He paid the ultimate price to be with YOU. This truth should not make us arrogant. It should humble us! And it should give us joy! Because the God who created us, knows us, and loves us is in control. This is where true joy comes from. Because circumstances can’t change this. God is bigger than all circumstances. He's bigger than our best days and he's bigger than our worst days. He's who we can go to as a consistent source of joy even when our situations don't make us feel happy. Are you starting to see why choosing joy is one of the ways we can have an evergreen faith? Joy can endure through even the most difficult seasons! Not because our circumstances cause joy, but because the truth of who God is and what He has done does not change. And what God has done should give us great joy!

 So will you choose Joy this Christmas? This isn't just a question for those whose circumstances may be difficult. I would ask the same question to people who are going to get everything they want this Christmas. Because choosing Joy is all about where our focus is. If we focus on all the gifts, the family time, the food, the music, and the movies… we’ll feel happy… temporarily. But that feeling will fade the minute December 26th rolls around. (really PREACH this section) Guys, please hear me on this, we choose joy at Christmas time when we choose to celebrate for the right reason. We choose joy when all of our attention is on the truth that God became a man. We choose joy when we focus on the truth that God is in control. Those truths are a source of true joy because they are for all seasons and for all time! **True** **Joy Endures!**

 I want to close by focusing on those of you who are going to have a difficult Christmas. Maybe for you, Christmas is a reminder of the loved ones you lost, your parent’s divorce, your ongoing battle with depression, your struggle with anxiety, or maybe it's a reminder of how lonely you feel. If that's you, I want to urge you to be open to the fact that God can offer you joy in the season. That may seem impossible right now, but let's not forget that we serve a God of the impossible. Like I've already said, it's not going to look the same as being happy. In fact, it might not even feel the same as being happy. But I promise you that if you dig into your relationship with God this Christmas, you will come out of this season closer to him and more filled with joy, and it will help you develop an evergreen faith. It won't be perfect. It won't fix everything. But it's a start. And it's what this season is all about.

Let’s close by refelcting on the incredible truths that Jesus SHOWED UP and that He is IN CHARGE. Let's take just a moment of quiet reflection and then sing “Joy To The World” together...

(Close by singing Joy To The World together and reflecting on the lyrics.)