

**Victory of the Lamb – Dec 26 Christmas at the Movies — Luke 2:7-20**  
**Elf – Everyday Joy – Pastor Bill Limmer**

You made it! The area beneath the tree is empty. Most of the wrapping paper is stuffed in plastic bags. Most of the dishes are in the dishwasher. The kids are no longer screaming or crying . . . as much. Oh, maybe you have one more celebration in just a couple of hours, but you made it.

Today we are wrapping up our series, Christmas at the movies. In this series we are looking at some of our favorite Christmas movies under the lens of the greatest story ever, God sending his Son, in flesh and blood in the manger to be our Savior and the Savior of the World. *Elf* is going to be our movie to conclude this series. And we are going to answer the question: **How can you experience the joy of Christmas every day?**

Our movie to conclude this series is *Elf*. As the movie begins, Buddy is living in an orphanage. When Santa is dropping off gifts at the orphanage Buddy crawls into Santa's big red bag and the next thing you know Buddy is walking out of the bag at the North Pole. He is raised by papa elf as an elf.

One day when Buddy was working in the toy shop, he is building etch a sketch's when he is asked how many he has made. He sheepishly says, 85. He was supposed to make a thousand. He feels bad about himself, and the next day finds out he is actually a human and not an elf. Which leads him to go to New York to find his real dad, Walter Hobbs.

Walter is a no-nonsense, hard-driving businessman working in the publishing industry. Walter is under a ton of stress and even though it is nearing Christmas time he finds little to no time for joy because Christmas just means deadlines, another thing to do and very little time to do it.

And that takes us to the shepherds of the greatest story ever. Let's see. **Luke 2:8-9 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.** The shepherds are living out in the fields nearby Bethlehem and either they're homeless, or they aren't welcome in town or both. They are keeping watch over their flocks at night. Did you know sheep love to wander even in the dark? And sheep have nocturnal predators. The shepherds were always on

high alert. They often put their lives on the line to protect the sheep. They were busy doing all the things leading up to that first Christmas day.

And that takes us to us. We don't always experience joy and cheer this time of year. Christmas can be more stressful than joyful. Our schedules were packed to begin with and then we added parties with friends, work, and family. Need gifts and clothes for each. We showed up trying to appear that we have it altogether making sure we have all the gifts for this side of the family. Meanwhile we were also shopping, baking, and trying to hit end of year goals at work.

This time of year brings extra relational stress too. Maybe there was a misunderstanding or worse and the friendship is no longer. No card or even text greeting is received. The marriage is over, and you didn't want it to be. But it is done. Maybe someone you love is running away from God, and they are not responding to you. Or maybe it is the first or second or third or more Christmases without a loved one. So, there is an empty spot at the table, the couch, and your heart. It is tough.

Maybe it is a health stress everything from fearfully awaiting the test results to the actual diagnosis of a life-threatening disease. And our mind races to darkness.

Maybe there is financial stress to begin with and then came an unexpected bill.

For lot of us, we are tired. We were crushed by expectations, by emotional pain from anxiety, burnout, comparisons, depression, disappointment, fears, grief, loneliness, regrets and stress of what if's. We are exhausted. **How can you experience the joy of Christmas every day? 1. It can be difficult because we are not always happy.**

Happiness is external. Happiness hinges on what happens. "I won the lottery." "I got this gift." "They got to be home." "Things are working out for me." But this is all temporary. Happiness isn't wrong it is just fleeting. Danielle LaPorte – Happiness is like rising bubbles delightful and ever fleeting. Joy is like oxygen, always there. You can still experience joy even if you don't feel happy.

Let's see how.

In the movie, the manager of Gimbels tells all the workers who are decorating the store for Christmas and setting up the photobooth that Santa is coming

tomorrow. And that is when Buddy says with great enthusiasm and joy. “Santa! I know him! I know him!” Buddy knows the jolly fellow in the big red suit, who owns a sleigh, and reindeer. He has a relationship with Santa. It made all the difference in his life.

Here is what it looked like for the shepherds. Luke 2: **An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.** <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” <sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

The shepherds knew Jesus. They had a real relationship with him. They didn’t just hear that he was born they went to his crib.

Everyday joy is about whose you are. You see, the joy you are looking for doesn’t come by your effort. It doesn’t come from a to do list. The joy you are looking for doesn’t come from the Christmas season it comes from Christ, from Jesus!

**How can you experience the joy of Christmas every day? 2. Because you know Jesus!**

The Bible teaches us Jesus is Savior of the world. The names Jesus means “the Lord saves.” And as our Savior, Jesus changes our relationship with God because even if you are hearing this for the very first time, Jesus removed all of your sins. And because of that you can let go of the sin, regret, the guilt, the shame, the anger, and have joy because you know Jesus.

Jesus meets you not only in the word but also in the sacraments. In your baptism you receive not Christmas clothes but Christ clothes. Galatians 3:27 <sup>27</sup> **for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** In communion Jesus unites himself with you. In him we have redemption through

his blood, the forgiveness of sins. Joy comes from God and is for you to receive. That's everyday joy.

Relationships change us. Luke 2:17-18 **When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.** They said, "Jesus! I know him! I know him! For the shepherds they could everyday joy because they knew him, Jesus, even when things were tough because of Jesus there is Joy.

Joy is internal and so we can be happy on the inside even though things are not going great on the outside. Here are some examples: When my mom died, I was sad on the outside, but I had joy on the inside. She was safe with Jesus in heaven. I know Jesus. I know him.

When the kids are doing their best to drive you crazy, you can say I'm not going to go crazy because I know Jesus. He is with me. I know him.

When the finances aren't adding up, you can still say I am spiritually rich because I know Jesus. I know him.

When people see the difficult times, you are going through, you get knocked down but you keep getting back up and they ask you how are you able to keep getting back up. You can admit I don't know why this is happening, but you can also say, "I know Jesus!" "I know him."

When you don't know what to do next, when you feel all alone you can pray because you know Jesus. You know him.

Your life doesn't have to be perfect to rejoice. You know Jesus. If you are looking for joy, you don't need to work for it. The Holy Spirit is bringing it to you, you just need to receive it. Because joy is already here in Jesus. The greatest thing you can take away today – is Jesus. Jesus, God with us, born in a manger, lived a perfect life, crucified on a cross, rose from the dead, living with you today. And now you know him. Jesus is not only the bringer and giver of everyday joy; Jesus is everyday joy!