

Alley Rundown—December 13th, 2020

Today's Bible Story: Joyful, Joyful (Gabriel Appears to Mary) • *Luke 1:26-56*

Today's Key Question: What are your plans for Christmas?

Today's Bottom Line: You can have joy because God has a plan for you.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.* Luke 2:11 (NIV)

CG: Christmas Filler Videos

WORSHIP: God So Good

Pray after Worship...

Supplies Needed: "5 Bucks" Box, 5 Stuffed Reindeer Toys, Wrapped Empty Box

"Hey, everyone! I hope you're all in the Christmas mood, because it's just around the corner! I have a feeling that this is going to be one of the best Christmases ever. Not sure why . . . but it's just a feeling I keep getting."

"And speaking of best Christmases ever, let's find out what was your best Christmas ever! Turn to your group and share about your best Christmas ever. Aaaaaaaand GO!"

After a few minutes, get everyone's attention.

"I have to admit I was eavesdropping a bit, and it sounds like there were some pretty awesome Christmases. Would anyone like to share about their best Christmas ever?"

Depending on time, take three to five answers from the group and comment on them accordingly.

"Those were great. You know what, though? Christmas is always a special time of year; doesn't it seem that way? No matter what's going on, it's the one time of year when everyone's a bit nicer to one another, everyone is a bit more forgiving, and there's a tangible feeling of joy."

"But what happens when things don't go exactly according to plan? What happens when the things you're hoping for at Christmas don't actually happen? How can you still find joy when things aren't really that joyful?"

"Life is sometimes unpredictable. I mean, this past year has definitely taught us that, right? Every month seemed like something new was happening! You might expect one thing . . . like, whoa! 5 bucks!? I'll take \$5 any time!"

Walk over to the Box marked "5 Bucks" and open it. Instead of \$5, there are five small reindeer toys inside it.

". . . but it turns out to be something completely different—five *actual* bucks."

"Things don't always go according to plan, and when plans change, when life gets messy, joy is sometimes super hard to find. So, what do we do then?"

"These are really great questions, ones that maybe some of you are asking right now. Thankfully, we can start to unravel the answers to these questions by looking in the Bible. To find some answers to these questions, we're heading to the book of Luke. It's a story that many of you might already know, but maybe you'll learn something you didn't know before! Let's take a look!"

CG: Lesson Video (Runtime: 11:00)

“Mary was a pretty ordinary girl who lived in a pretty ordinary town. The town was called Nazareth, and it sat on the outskirts of Jewish lands. She grew up like most other kids, learning all about the Jewish Scriptures. Contained in those Scriptures would’ve been something we actually talked about last week, from Isaiah:

“A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called wonderful Adviser and Mighty God.”

“Everyone wondered when it would happen! When was this Savior coming? And the answer is right in present number one! Can someone open it for me and take out what’s inside?”

Have someone open box to find that it is completely empty.

“Yep. It’s empty. Sorry. That’s because no one knew when this was going to happen. Well, God knew. But God wasn’t telling. And it had been literally hundreds of years since all of these prophecies about a Savior had been recorded. You see, God had a plan for Mary. Actually, He had a plan for all of mankind. His plan included Mary, but Mary couldn’t see the whole plan when Gabriel showed up. She was pregnant without a husband and asked to be the Savior’s mom. It was a lot to take in—and it was not what she expected her life to be at all.”

“But I want you to think about one thing Mary said at the very beginning, just as Gabriel was leaving. She said, *(Read directly from Luke 1:38, NIV) “I serve the Lord . . . May it happen to me just as you said it would.”* In other words, ‘I know You got this, God. I’m just along for the ride, and I’ll trust that You know what You’re doing.’”

“God has a good plan for all of us. A good plan, not a bad one. Part of that plan is for us to have a close relationship with Jesus. Real joy comes from trusting in ‘God’s good plan.’ Even when things happen that you don’t expect, you can find joy in knowing that God is with you . . . and that He sent Jesus for you.”

“Mary didn’t ask to be Jesus’ mom, but she was chosen to be His mom anyway. She thought she would have a normal life with her normal husband in a normal town.”

“It’s the same way with us sometimes, isn’t it? We have a plan of our own, and we have an idea how things are going to work out. But then something happens that changes everything. And sometimes it is God’s plan working itself out for us.”

“Today as we wrap up our talk, think about this:”

SLIDE: Key Question

“**What are your plans for Christmas?** Not what things you want to unwrap on your list, but what are your plans for celebrating? What would happen if those plans were totally turned around—what would you do? Would you complain that you didn’t get to do what you wanted? Or, like Mary, would you simply say, *(Read directly from Luke 1:38, NIV) “I serve the Lord . . . May it happen to me just as you said it would.”*” Let’s pray and thank God for Jesus!”

Lead group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, lead the “All Together Activities” as detailed on the attached sheet.