

## Comfort and Joy

Merry Christmas everyone – and welcome to my home. We decided this year to change the service around a bit and to bring you the message in the middle of the service – and here from my home. I want to share a word with you – and then in a few minutes – we will sing a few more songs and then light our candles together.

For At-Home: And remember – after the service – if you would like to receive communion together – there will be a link for you to click on – where I lead you through that special communion moment together. So be sure to look for it after we finish lighting candles.

Traditions – around the TV with an old movie – or playing games

Weather is cold – fireplace is lit

In the south – been known to turn on the AC just to have a fire

Hot chocolate – apple cider – and a blanket

My blankets – Augusta – LSU –

You've got to love a blanket

In prayer months ago – heard the LORD say

Let the people know that God desires to wrap them in a blanket of...

“It's going to be okay”

Blankets say I see you and I want to somehow cover and support you –  
comfort you

That's why our theme this year of “Comfort and Joy”

## Comfort and Joy

(Luke 2:4-7 NIV) So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to

the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

(Luke 2:12 NIV) “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Interesting to me – “this will be a sign to you”

This will be a unique thing

This will be something you’ll want to pay attention to

This is important!

Jesus was wrapped

Some translations say – swaddling cloths

KJV – swaddling cloths

Cloths designed to protect

Simulate the feeling of being in the womb

Swaddling bands were marked – identify whose baby it was

Other translations just say “cloths”

In the Message paraphrase – it simply says...

(Luke 2:7 MSG) She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger...

Let me teach you something in theology...

That will make this even more special to you

In theology – there is what is called the theology of identification

Simply means – that even though Jesus was 100% fully God

Jesus had to go through every aspect humanity to identify with us

He went through life – relationships – betrayal – pain – joy

Even as a baby – there helpless – cold – and the first thing...

His mother – Mary – wrapped Jesus in a blanket – comforter if you will  
So He could comfort us.  
She comforted Him so He could comfort others.

Again in the theology of Identification  
He had to experience it  
So He could understand how to receive comfort  
So He could give comfort

I've been thinking about blankets – preparing for this message

I read one study – that the reason blankets are so comforting is that they create physical pressure when they are wrapped around you that helps produce serotonin in the body

Serotonin is the key hormone that stabilizes our mood – it gives us feelings of well-being, and happiness.

I guess that's why they're called – Comforters

Think about this...

Jesus was comforted by His mother Mary on the day He was born  
And then at the end of His life – on the night before the cross  
Jesus' whole conversation with the disciples was...  
How He would leave the earth and send the a Comforter

Of course He was talking about the Holy Spirit  
But Jesus' favorite description of the Holy Spirit – Comforter

(John 14:16 KJV) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.

Isn't that an interesting word that Jesus used describe the Holy Spirit

What does that mean?

It means – God desires to wrap you – comfort you  
Remember – the Bible says – this will be a sign unto you – you  
Let me say it this way...

The blanket that comforted Jesus then points to the One  
who wants to comfort you now.

Let me finish this message

Show you the characteristics of natural blankets/comforters  
How they give a picture of the Comforter – the Holy Spirit

Comforters are both beautiful and useful.

We use them to decorate our bedrooms – but they also have a function  
Or at least they should be functional

Story – buying Tammy a new comforter

Disappeared when we went to bed

“It’s for looks – not just for use”

I’ve found out since – many things in our home – guest towels

Many believers – Comforter not for use – just for looks

(John 14:16 KJV) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another  
Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.

The Holy Spirit isn’t just some fancy word – sing in our hymns

He is supposed to be a personal – functional – important part

(2 Corinthians 13:14 NIV) May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the  
love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

He is both beautiful and useful

Comforters are large enough to fit every part of us.

Or at least they should be

Nothing worse than a blanket that's not big enough  
Sacrifice the neck or the feet

In the same way – the Holy Spirit isn't just for Sunday – spiritual life

(Galatians 5:25 NLT) Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

God puts His Spirit in us – for every part of our life

Direction – confirmation – warning

Story – how the Holy Spirit spoke to me 20 years ago to come to BHAM

(Isaiah 30:21 NIV) Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

The Holy Spirit wants to play a role in every part of your life

Comforters insulate us from the external elements.

Some are so good – it doesn't matter how cold it is

Insulated – down comforters

Story – I was reading how in the war time a blanket was considered an essential part of a soldier's kit bag. Just as in the natural it was an essential part of the kit bag for those on the front lines – the Holy Spirit is an essential part of our survival.

The Holy Spirit is not just comforting but protects us from the external elements. I'm talking about spiritual warfare

Jesus said...

(Acts 1:8 NIV) "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you."

Later the Book of Acts says...

(Acts 10:38 NLT) And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

When you start reading Scriptures like this

Most don't know this kind of God

A powerful God – a healing God – one who overcomes the devil

But this is who the Holy Spirit is – necessary part of our Christian lives

After the Ascension of Jesus – outpouring of the Holy Spirit

So many don't know about the Holy Spirit

So many have never received the Comforter

Story – that's why kids like blankets

Many have a hard time giving them up

In fact – I heard about one technique to get them off

Cut a little bit of the blanket off – slowly

Keep making it smaller and smaller to wean them off

That's probably not a bad thing in reality

You don't want an adult walking around with a blanket

But it is a bad thing spiritually

We go through years like this year

Away from church – away from God – discouraged

We end up being weaned off of God – His comfort

I've got this God

But finding out that we feel helpless

We need the Person of the Holy Spirit – Helper

So many don't feel that way – especially this year  
Feel exposed – feel unhealthy – feel sad

Ezekiel prophesied that there would be a generation who would be  
uncovered – listen to this...

(Ezekiel 16:4 NKJV) As for your nativity, on the day you were born your  
navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you  
were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths.

The Bible prophesies that there would be a generation who were not  
wrapped – but were uncovered – exposed by the elements

This year at Highlands – the Person of the Holy Spirit  
Give us a year – go all in