

^{NIV} **1 Peter 3:13** Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ **But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.** The Bible says:

- ^{NAS} **Luke 6:22** “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.”
- ^{NAS} **1 Peter 2:20** “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.”

“Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” Jesus said: ^{NAS} **Matthew 10:28** “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

¹⁵ **But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.** *Who is the boss of your life; who is in charge?* Jesus said: ^{NAS} **Luke 6:46** “And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?”

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... When Jesus is truly the Lord of our lives, *we will be different AND people will eventually ask: What's up? What's going on with you? Why are you different? Let's always be ready to respond with truth, gentleness, and respect! Amen!*

The Names and Themes of the Advent Candles

Third Name: **The Shepherd's Candle**

Theme: REJOICE!

Based on **Luke 2:8-18; 1 Peter 3:13-15** NIV

3rd **Wednesday of Advent**

December 16, 2009 ► **Wednesday at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m.**



Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, as we return to our Advent Wreath, we remember the *significance* and *story* of each candle:

- Week 1: **The Prophecy Candle** recalls the *fulfilled* prophecies in connection with Jesus' first coming and the *yet-to-be-fulfilled* prophecies in connection with His second coming.
- Week 2: **The Bethlehem Candle** recalls the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem for Jesus' birth, as well as *our journey through our Christian lives* from now to the glory of heaven.
- Week 3, *today*: **The Shepherd's Candle** recalls the rejoicing of the lowly shepherds who *heard* the good news and *saw* the Newborn Savior; then joyfully told others what they had *heard* and *seen*.

1. **Lowly but Chosen:**

- a. ^{NIV} **Luke 2:8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. Living out in the fields! *Today, we might call such people homeless!* The point is this: Shepherds were not important people in the eyes of the world, *yet Jesus came for all – from the lowest to the highest!*

- b. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. It was night, *dark*; the appearance of an angel and the Lord's glory would frighten anyone!
- c. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Being in the presence of an awesome being could bring *great fear* or *great joy*, depending upon *why* the angel is present. In this case the news was *GOOD* and *FOR ALL THE PEOPLE!*
- d. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. From the first sin, to the shepherds, to us, and to the end of time, ***all are sinners and all are helpless to save themselves, so all NEED a Savior***; therefore, the news is so very good: **He has been born – TO YOU!**
- e. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Back then in the little town of Bethlehem, there may have been 5, 10, or 20 infants, *so how did the shepherds know which one was the Savior?* When they found the one **"wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."**

2. **The Greatest Alleluia Choir:** ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Not peace on earth; *there will always be wars and rumors of wars!* Instead, peace – ***true peace between God and sinners!*** In an *objective* sense, God's great gift of peace is for **EVERONE!** But *subjectively* – *personally,*

only those who **BY GRACE → THROUGH FAITH → IN JESUS → FOR ETERNAL LIFE** are in possession of and benefitting from God's great gift of peace!

3. **Seeing is Greater Joy:**

- a. 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." *The lowly shepherds had just been overwhelmed with angels, glory, and good news!* They did not doubt, but they wanted to see the Savior – *their Savior* – *with their own eyes!*
- b. ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. They were told, so they went and they found – *exactly as the angels had announced!*
- c. 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. Having seen, they told others – **"they spread the word..."** with much excitement, sincerity, and joy!

Conclusion – *Since God has saved us through Jesus, we are compelled to share the good news:*

Peter wrote these words to encourage his readers to ✦ do good, ✦ not be afraid, ✦ have Christ as the Lord of their lives, and ✦ be ever-ready to share the good news!