

The Season of Advent: **The Shepherd's Sunday of Joy**

- * We have considered the history of the celebration of Advent in the Church.
- * It is believed that the celebration began around this time of year because:
The "Light of the world" came during the darkest time of the year! The Winter Solstice!
- * We have seen how the Prophets began to tell of the coming Messiah that would correct the separation of Man from his Creator God!
- * Now, let's look at the how the supernatural plan of God took on a very natural and even irreverent look!!!

I. Have you ever thought about how strange it was for God to tell of the arrival of Jesus the Messiah to a bunch of Shepherds FIRST!!

A. Why not in the halls of the Court yard of Caiaphas the High Priest?

1. This seems logical because this is where all of the Jewish discussions, rulings and consideration of laws took place.
2. Would it not have "made a splash" for an Angel of the Lord to suddenly appear and declare The Messiah is finally coming!!
3. We have no sure way of knowing but maybe the Jewish leadership had become so corrupt, calloused or blinded that they would have never been able to see this plan of God taking form and fulfillment!

Luke 2:8-20 (NLT)

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." 15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, 19 but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. 20 The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

B. First, why the shepherds? Why were the “lowly shepherds” the first to be told about the coming Messiah?

1. Tradition says they may have been the “temple shepherds.”
2. These were those in charge of keeping the sheep that would be used in temple sacrifice. The “spotless lambs.”

C. These were man who were given the responsibility to watch over lambs that were raised for Temple sacrifice.

Exodus 12:3-7 (NIV)

3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. 4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. 7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs.

1. The prophecies and Expectations/Hope of the coming of the Lord!

Isaiah 53:7 (NIV)

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

2. Paul sheds light and brings revelation to this coming!!

1 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)

7 Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

3. Peter further explains this analogy or type and shadow of New Covenant Redemption!!!

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

II. Remember the message of the Angel!!!

A. "Good news that will bring great joy!"

1. This "good news" is what we now call the "The Gospel of Jesus Christ!"
2. It's "good news" because Jesus is the Lamb of God that provides for our sin, separation and guilt before God!

Hebrews 7:22-25

22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. 23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

B. It was also a message of "Peace on earth!" Our message for the next Sunday of our Advent study!

1. Notice it's not a "general peace" or lack of hostility in the earth!
2. It is peace "to those to whom God is pleased!"
3. Or in other words it's peace for those who belong to The Lord!

Colossians 3:15 (NIV)

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Philippians 4:7 (NIV)

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

John 14:27 (NIV)

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 (NIV)

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you!

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

III. Remember, earlier we lit the Shepherd's candle! We are celebrating the Sunday of Joy!

A. In Luke the meaning of the Greek word used for JOY is:

1. To rejoice
2. To be glad
3. To be well and thrive

B. So today, because of the coming of Jesus, we can:

1. Rejoice!
2. Be glad!
3. We can live well and thrive!

C. Because of the birth of Jesus in flesh, we have been restored to our pre-fall relationship and fellowship with our Creator!

***** We can once again walk with God in the "cool of the day!" *****