

## **Christmas series: The Arrival**

**Title** – Shepherd’s Candle – Faith Leads to Peace

**Text:**

The Arrival

Shepherd’s Candle – Faith Leads to Peace

Recognizing that God has fulfilled His prophecies in the past brings Hope that he will fulfill all of His Word

Hope in God’s Word brings faith to follow Him in all things and at all times, bringing Immanuel with us.

That Faith lived out produces PEACE within and the favor (Goodwill) of God resting upon us.

Different traditions allocate themes for the candles and apply words to each week. The traditions have different viewpoints. I.E. John the Baptist candle, whether it is a love candle or faith candle. Which one is Joy and which one is peace. Some call the shepherd’s candle the candle of Joy others peace. I have chosen the word peace

Hope leads to faith

Faith leads to peace

Peace leads to Joy

- The Prophet’s Candle - Hope
- The Bethlehem’s Candle - Faith
- The Shepherd’s Candle – Peace
- The Angel’s candle - Joy

### **The Need for Peace**

**How we mitigate anxiety : As little as a tick**

I hate the texture of wet wooden utensil

I don't use napkins, ever. I don't like how they feel. Gives me goosebumps bad.

Thermoses creep me out. I feel like the lids will never get clean.

I can’t stand water that isn’t bottled or has ice in it

I love pickles and I eat them one end, then the other, then the middle.

Sandwiches I also eat all around the edges then the middle.

I have a fear of velvet. The texture makes my skin crawl. I will full blown go into panic mode if I touch it, even if it's an accident.

I twirl my hair, especially when I am nervous or anxious or bored or.....

I almost never can eat the last bite of my food. Even if I'm still hungry I struggle with that very last bite

Can't go to bed or sleep if my kitchen or floor isn't clean

When setting timers and alarms, I set them for times that don't end in 0 or 5. Others, multiples of five... I myself cannot do odd numbers other than 5

I cannot drive without music playing.

When I purchase a coffee to go, I have to align the picture on the cup sleeve to the picture on the cup and align the sipping hole to the pictures.

We all may have some odd quirks or ticks that unconsciously or consciously aid us against internal tensions. They are attempts to bring about some peace in a chaotic world

### **The world is not at peace: As large as personal collapse**

- Civil unrest
- Political wars
- Division among nations and families
- Internal turmoil
- Suicides are up 300%

Even the pagans of the first century world sensed this need for peace and a savior.

Epictetus, a first century pagan writer and a stoic philosopher, expressed this:

“While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy; he cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearns for more than even outward peace.” Epictetus

Interesting Mental Health Update: Gallup poll reveals the only people in America who are doing better this year than last year are folks who participate weekly in their church service.

### **The shepherd's candle answers the question of where do we find peace**

Luke 2:8-20

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

### WHO THEY WERE: Outcasts or Ordinary

- Traditions say Outcast
  - **Aristotle** called the shepherds outcast
    - “the laziest are shepherds, who lead an idle life, and get their subsistence without trouble from tame animals; their flocks wandering from place to place in search of pasture, they are compelled to follow them, cultivating a sort of living farm.”
  - Many **theologians** have stated that the profession was one of the outcast...the unclean...the underprivileged
  - Farrar said in 1893, “Shepherds at this time were a despised class.”
  - Strack and Billerbeck (1924) said, “The shepherds were despised people.”
  - Stein (1992) said, “In general, shepherds were dishonest and unclean according to the standards of the law. They represent the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came.”
  - Butler (2000) said, “Shepherding had changed from a family business as in David’s time to a despised occupation.”
  - Finally, Utley (2004) said, “The rabbis considered them to be religious outcasts and their testimony was not admissible in court.”
  - Those are just a few quotes from scholars throughout the last 100 plus years.
- **Scripture says otherwise**
  - Yet the **Scripture** values this profession over and over again
  - Abraham was a shepherd. Genesis 13 describes him as having much livestock, herds, and flocks of sheep.
  - Exodus 3:1 says Moses was a shepherd: “Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro.”
  - David was a shepherd (according to 1 Samuel 17) who took care of his father’s flocks.
  - God is also pictured as a shepherd in the Old Testament. One of the most famous verses in all of Scripture proclaims this: “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps 23:1).
  - Genesis 49:24 says, “Yet his bow remained steady, and his strong arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.” Psalm 80:1 says, “Listen, Shepherd of Israel.”
  - The Lord speaks in Ezekiel 34:12, saying, “As a shepherd looks for his sheep on the day he is among his scattered flock, so I will look for My flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a cloudy and dark day.”
  - Matthew 2:6 describes Jesus as a shepherd: “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah: because out of you will come a leader who will shepherd My people Israel.”
  - The most powerful passage connecting Jesus to the shepherd motif is John 10. Jesus discusses shepherding, and he places himself in the role of shepherd, calling himself “the good shepherd” (John 10:11).
  - The shepherd profession was respected and honored
    - Many people would hire the shepherd to watch over their two or three sheep.

- These were hard working, regular men. The average man who works the entire week for his family.
- This is the everyman. The every woman.
- God gave this message to the average person for a great a special task.
- To share His peace!

### THEIR LOCATION: Ordinary or Honored

- Have you ever wondered why angels appeared to unnamed shepherds at night outside a small village called **Bethlehem** to proclaim a message of universal importance?
  - These shepherds were very specific shepherds and honored for a particular task.

#### Of Bethlehem

- Luke 2:1-20 locates us geographically, historically, and prophetically. The ancient prophet Micah foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

Micah 5:2

*“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
out of you will come for me  
one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old,  
from ancient times.”*

- This prophecy was confirmed in Matthew's gospel, answering for us the relevance of Bethlehem.

#### Regulations of Mishnah

- Consider the possibility that these were not shepherds of ordinary sheep.
- Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) provides an intriguing answer to our question. He was Jewish by birth and training. Later, he became a follower of Jesus, studied and taught biblical theology in Scotland, and wrote *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.
  - Writing about these shepherds, Edersheim referenced the Jewish Mishnah.
- The Mishnah is a collection of documents recording oral traditions governing the lives of Jewish people during the period of the Pharisees.
  - As such, an understanding of the Mishnah gives us insight into how Jewish people lived during the time of Jesus.
- One regulation in the Mishnah “expressly forbids the keeping of flocks throughout the land of Israel, except in the wildernesses – and the only flocks otherwise kept, would be those for the Temple-services” (Bab K. 7:7; 80a).
- Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and their surrounding fields were not in the wilderness where ordinary flocks of sheep were kept.
  - Therefore, according to the Jewish regulations, the flocks under the care of the shepherds near Bethlehem must have been “for the Temple-services.”

- These shepherds watched over sheep destined as sacrifices in the Temple at Jerusalem.

### WHERE THEY WENT: Tower of the Flock.

- You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.
  - If this was to be a sign, it had to be significant.
  - When we hear of swaddling clothes, we think of our current meaning of swaddling, to hold a baby close to restrain movement.
  - Also, we think of a manger as a dirty, feeding trough for animals. However, these are both incorrect.
- Due to recent archeological evidence in Israel, we now know what these signs pointed to.
  - **If swaddling clothes were a common practice after the birth of a child, how would this be a sign?**
    - Would they have to knock on every door in Bethlehem to ask if a child was born?
    - If a manger were a feeding trough for stable animals, it wouldn't be any different.
    - They would have to go around and ask everyone if they knew where the baby was born.
    - It would have been no different than if the angels had left after they announced that he was born in the city of David. Instead, they pointed the shepherds exactly to where the baby was born.
- These signs pointed the shepherds to the **Tower of the Flock**.
  - The Tower of the Flock was on the outskirts of Bethlehem and overlooked the fields in which the Levitical shepherds kept their flocks for the Temple.
  - When a sheep was about to give birth, it was taken to the tower.
  - The newborn lambs were placed in a manger, a clean stone bed, to be examined with swaddling clothes, white linens which would be used to find any blemishes.
  - Because the sacrifices had to be without spot or blemish, much care was taken to make sure that the lambs were free of any infirmities.
- **There was only one place in Bethlehem that had a manger and swaddling clothes-the Tower of the Flock.**
  - The shepherds immediately recognized the signs as they were implements that they were familiar with.
  - They would have no problem finding the babe since they knew exactly where He was.
- How incredible is it that the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) was born in the exact place that the sacrificial lambs for the Temple were born?
- Just as the Temple lambs had to be spotless, so He had to be without fault to take our sin upon Him.
- Christ was indeed the perfect Lamb of God given to us.

### WHAT THEY SHARED: Savior, Messiah, Peace

- *"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>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth **peace** to those on whom his favor rests."*

- Savior - (*sōtēr*), meaning a **saviour**, a deliverer;
- Messiah - "*Mashiach*," means "**the one anointed** with oil."
- Peace - *Shalom* - **harmony**, wholeness, completeness,
- The paschal lamb – The Passover lamb that covers the people was to be born so that the sacrifices would be no more and that PEACE between god and man was secured.
- They rejoiced! The sacrifices would be over! The sins of man were to be forgiven. The Lord, the savior, the messiah would bring peace!

### **Christ is Our Peace**

Eph. 2:14-22 NKJV

*<sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, <sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. <sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*

Christ the peace between god and Man and we are to be the ordinary man who rejoices in that peace and shares that peace to all we encounter!

**FACT: When a believer loses his peace with God, it is a road to destruction.**

1. **If he has lost his peace, he may become discouraged and defeated.**
2. **If he has lost his peace, he becomes critical and divisive.**
3. **He begins to slip back into attitudes and actions of sin.**

**The peace that he once had with God and man becomes disturbed.**

- Their restlessness begins to tighten and crease their soul.
- Their restlessness begins to bring out the anger inside them
- Their restlessness may cause them to sin.
- Their restlessness can bring them to despair, defeat and depression; They are doing it to themselves.

**The undesirable effect of losing God's peace:**

- They feel that they have failed.
- They feel unworthy and unable to walk right with God.

This is the importance of this passage: the secret of peace – the peace of God Himself.

## **PEACE IS THE ABSENCE OF FEAR:**

*“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27, KJV)*

## **DEFINITION**

It is always helpful to define the words we are dealing with and so think about the definition of PEACE. Peace [ceirene] means to bind together, to join, to weave together. It means that a person is:

- bound,
- woven
- and joined together with
- himself,
- with God
- and with others.

The Hebrew word *SHALOM* means freedom from trouble and much more. It means:

- experiencing God’s highest good,
- enjoying the very best,
- possessing all the inner good possible.
- wholeness and soundness.
- good, enjoying the very best.
- prosperity in the widest sense.
- especially prosperity in the spiritual sense of having a soul that blossoms and flourishes.

## **5 TYPES OF PEACE:**

1. **There is the peace of the world. This is a peace...**

- **of escapism.**
- of avoiding trouble.
- of refusing to face things.
- of unreality.
- sought through pleasure.
- satisfaction,
- contentment.
- the absence of trouble.
- positive thinking.
- the denial of problems.

2. **There is the Peace of Christ , This is, a peace deep within. It is a...**

- tranquility of mind.
- a composure.
- a peace that is calm in the face of bad circumstances and situations.
- It is more than feelings – even more than attitude and thought.

### 3. There is the peace of victory.

It is the peace of independent conditions and environment; the peace which no sorrow, no danger, no suffering, no experience can take it away.

*“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33, KJV)*

### 4. There is the peace of purpose.

*“And we KNOW that ALL THINGS work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28, emphasis added, NKJV)*

This is a PEACE OF PURPOSE. It is the peace of unquestionable confidence; the peace with a sure knowledge of one’s life in the hands of God and that all things will work out for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

### 5. There is the peace of intimacy with God.

It is the peace of the highest good. It is the peace that settles the mind, strengthens the will and establishes the heart.

*“Be anxious for NOTHING, but in EVERYTHING by prayer and supplication, with THANKSGIVING, let your requests be made KNOWN to God; and the PEACE OF GOD, which surpasses all understanding, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.” (Philippians 4:6-7, emphasis added, NKJV)*

## **CONSIDER THE SOURCE OF PEACE:**

**True** peace is always borne out of RECONCILIATION. Its source is found ONLY in the reconciliation brought about by Jesus Christ. Peace ALWAYS has to do with personal relationships:

- a man’s relationship to himself.
- his relationship to God.
- his relationship to his or her spouse.
- his relationship to mankind.

NOTE: A man must be bound, woven and joined together with himself, with God (through salvation) and with his fellow man.

*“But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. FOR He Himself is OUR peace, who has made both ONE, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,” (Ephesians 2:13-14 NKJV)*

*“For it please the FATHER that in Him [Jesus] all the fullness should dwell, and by Him, to reconcile ALL THINGS to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, HAVING MADE PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS. And you who were ONCE were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has RECONCILED.” (Colossians 1:19-21 NKJV)*

## **THE STEPS TO PEACE**

### **1. Accepting Christ as Savior**

*“Therefore, having been justified BY FAITH, we have PEACE with God THROUGH our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1 NKJV)*

### **2. Loving God’s Word**

*“GREAT PEACE have those who LOVE Your Law, and nothing causes them to stumble. LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and I DO Your COMMANDMENTS. My Soul KEEPS Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I KEEP Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are BEFORE You.” (Psalm 119:165-168 NKJV)*

*“These things I have spoken to you, THAT IN ME you may have PEACE. In the world you will have tribulation; but BE OF GOOD CHEER, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NKJV)*

### **3. Praying about everything**

*“pray without ceasing,” (I Thessalonians 5:17, NKJV)*

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in EVERYTHING by prayer and supplication, with THANKSGIVING, LET your requests be known unto God; and the PEACE OF GOD which surpasses all understanding. WILL guard your hearts and minds THROUGH Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6-7 NKJV)*

### **4. Being spiritually minded.**

*“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be SPIRITUALLY MINDED IS LIFE AND PEACE.” (Romans 8:6 KJV)*

### **5. Keeping your mind upon God.**

*“You will KEEP him in perfect PEACE, whose MIND is stayed upon You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for YAH, the Lord is everlasting strength.” (Isaiah 26:3-4 NKJV)*

*“Finally, brethren, WHATEVER things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God OF PEACE will be with you.” (Philippians 4:8-9 NKJV)*

## 6. Keeping God's commandments.

*“Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and HIS SPIRIT HAVE SENT ME.’ Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the WAY YOU SHOULD GO. Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your PEACE would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea’.” (Isaiah 48: 16-18, NKJV)*

*“The things which you have learned and received and heard and saw in me, THESE DO, and the God of PEACE will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9 NKJV)*

## 7. Loving One Another.

*“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:” (Hebrews 12:14, NKJV)*

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35, NKJV)*

Someone has said, “A cheerful heart leads to a cheerful life and this is the goal of a true believer as they daily walk through the remainder of their life on earth.”

It can be had, God tells us how and it is produced by God Himself, the Holy Spirit, if we follow His direction and are under His control.

### TO HAVE PEACE ONE MUST WALK WITH CHIRST DAILY.

*“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools BUT AS WISE, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be UNWISE, but UNDERSTAND what the WILL of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be FILLED [controlled] with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18 NKJV)*

The shepherds worked daily preparing for sacrifices that were to bring peace with God for man. This message to them was a life changer and they rejoiced.

Immanuel born in the tower of the flock, wrapped in swaddling clothes came to be the sacrifice, once and for all, that you might have peace with God and peace in life.

Peace is not the absence of storms  
Peace is the presence of God

The peace you seek is found in the Lord.  
If you place your hope in Him  
If you place your faith in Him  
You will find Peace in Him

When you are empty – His words are not empty  
He will carry you, comfort you and care for you!