

# The Third Sunday in Advent

## Luke 2:8-20

Mary and Joseph, secure in God's LOVE and wrapped in God's PEACE, traveled to Bethlehem and settled into a stall where Jesus was born and laid in a manger. While the prophecies of the Old Testament were being fulfilled, there were shepherds out in the fields with their flocks of sheep. This was how the shepherds spent many nights, and, to them, this night was like all the others. They sat quietly in the dark, watching over their sheep as they grazed or rested. Then, all of a sudden, out of the sky, an angel appeared "and the glory of the Lord was shining around them."

Imagine how surprised and scared these shepherds must have been! One minute, they were squinting through darkness out at their sheep. Then, they were blinded in a spotlight, looking up at an angel! "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'"

As the shepherds stood in awe and their eyes adjusted to the light, more angels arrived! Together these angels proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And then, as quickly as they arrived, the angels disappeared, and the shepherds were left in the dark. As their eyes once again adjusted to the darkness, the shepherds decided, "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us."

Following the angels' instructions, the shepherds headed to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus just as the angels told them they would. Imagine their JOY when they saw God's Son before their eyes! They quickly spread out to share the news with the public. Their JOY was contagious; they shared their JOY with everyone they met! Rather than sending holy angels, God sent these ordinary shepherds to spread the news of his Son's birth to the community. The people never saw angels, but they believed the shepherds' good news and headed to the stable to share the JOY of Jesus' birth.

God sends parents, pastors, Sunday School teachers, and friends to teach us about God’s love and his Son, Jesus. We haven’t heard the angels sing, but we have heard the choirs sing. We, too, are called to share the JOY in knowing God with our friends and our family.

## Explore More

1 Peter 1:8-9:

You have not seen Christ, but still you love him. You can’t see him now, but you believe in him. You are filled with a wonderful and heavenly joy that cannot be explained. Your faith has a goal, and you are reaching that goal—your salvation.

How does this verse explain that we can find great JOY? \_\_\_\_\_

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How will knowing this truth guide you each day? \_\_\_\_\_

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