

**Advent Series: “Calm and Bright” Advent 2: JOY
“Glories Stream”**

Message by DD Adams
2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Kemptown Providence U.M. Church
December 9, 2018

The gospel text for today is from Luke, chapter 2, verses 8 - 17. ⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child. This is God’s word for God’s people.

Please pray with me. Lord shine all around us as your presence carries us to you. May the glories that shine with your light ... stream into our hearts and minds as we wait till you arrive. Fill our whole being and let the choices we make bring your light and joy. Help us listen and draw near with faith that continues to pour into us from above. When our nights are cold and lonely, come Emmanuel and reassure us. In our waiting may we find a patience that moves us to joy. Amen.

Being a shepherd is a lonely and isolated living. Shepherds might not return home for months and walk miles as the sheep graze. In this story, the shepherds were probably slaves or hired hands pulling all-nighters and living outside. They were underpaid and weren't the owners of the land or the sheep. Relentlessly they guarded the flock.

It must've been a dangerous job—warring off animals that preyed on the sheep. They spent hours every night trying to occupy their thoughts. And another quality about shepherds?—they smelled bad—just like the sheep. Shepherds were second class citizens, uneducated, and were considered the lowest of the low.

Long nights required patience in order to stay alert and fight off the distractions. If a fierce hungry predator appeared, fear was the first emotion to rise up—but one night—something else terrified the shepherds. An angel appeared and it literally turned the darkness into a bright sky. The shepherds shook with fear and any joy quickly melted away. What a distraction! How terrified they were!

But the angel said, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” No longer was the night long and lonely because down from the heavenlies angels sang out “Alleluia”! “Christ, the Savior is born, Christ, the Savior is born”! A great company of the heavenly host appeared praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Wow! What a wakeup call!

Their first reaction is fear! And here we are, talking about fear again. We too can get jittery and nervous and afraid. It’s a universal human condition! We feel and see something we can’t control, and it’s a threat. And nowadays, just as then, fear can become a habit that takes over our lives. We can begin to see the bad and fearsome in everything! We can freeze, stop thinking, and just go numb.

I imagine the shepherds felt like that on this *Silent Night*. All was calm, all was bright, and then all of a sudden, angels started singing and proclaiming that the Christ child has been born in the town of David! The Messiah, the LORD has been born in a manger, and it was a sign for them.

The angel’s message was, “We’ve got Good News!” Which is another way in Scripture to say God’s presence and strength is here. That’s easy to forget—that we’re not alone. We go through things that terrify us, and it can become a big distraction to our worship of Christ. We need to remember—God’s presence and strength is here with us now and always!

It doesn't take but a few moments for the shepherds to get it. Because remember, they're waiting for the Messiah. Now look at what happened. They went from fear to joy, from panic to praise, from distraction and fear to overwhelming JOY! What a transformation! When they realized the Messiah, THE LORD had been born, they said to each other, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that's happened." So *they hurried off* and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

"They hurried off" Scripture states. They changed their plans. They got focused and energized and decided to put all their hopes and dreams into this message. After all what else did they have? This was the best of the best Good News they'd ever heard! So what about us?

We know that God's goodness, presence and strength is in us and all around us. We can be moved—just like the shepherds—to go from distraction and fear to joy and singing Alleluia's too. We can embrace joy, even in the midst of all the busyness and preparation for the season. We can let that star shine its light from within us to the world!

We can acknowledge the Christ child's birth and allow that fear to roll off and away from us. We can be filled with JOY! And that JOY can spill out and over to everyone around us as it streams everywhere! We can choose to silence messages that provoke distraction and fear. We can also embrace a focus that

centers our minds on the message of Christmas. Let's remember who empowers and enables us to endure with JOY in this life. Let's remind ourselves to praise God and adore the Christ in all we encounter during this busy season.

Please pray with me. Remind us again O God that your presence and strength is here today as every day. Let it be a reminder of the response we're to have and keep as God's people to give our gift to you, our personal Savior. Help us to refuse any distractions and fear. Teach us your way, Lord, so that we can walk in your truth. Make our hearts focus only on honoring your name. Amen.