

## THE CANDLES OF ADVENT

The **Third Candle** of the Advent wreath has been called the **Candle of the Shepherds**. It represents the spirit of joy with which the shepherds went to Bethlehem. This Sunday the Advent mood of repentance is replaced by rejoicing. That is why a pink candle is sometimes used for the third candle. We think about the joyful anticipation in the hearts of the shepherds on their way to Bethlehem.

### Lessons for The Third Sunday in Advent, Series C

Isaiah 35:1-10 ~ *The joy of God's people in the Kingdom is like a desert celebrating rain.*

James 5:7-11 ~ *As a farmer waits patiently for harvest, we await the fulfillment of the Kingdom.*

Matthew 11:2-15 ~ *Jesus pointed to Kingdom signs fulfilled, as He encouraged John's disciples.*

**God's Gift of Joy to the World** – Joy is the mark of the Kingdom of Heaven. Isaiah expressed it in terms of a desert blooming exuberantly after a spring shower. James described the patient waiting of a farmer who needs the autumn and spring rains to harvest a crop. When John's disciples asked about Jesus' identity, they were referred to the witness of Jesus' deeds -- and the joy of those who received His care in their suffering. The message of joy to the world that the shepherds heard is fulfilled in Jesus.

We miss the signs of God's Kingdom when we look for power, glory, and political influence. We lose the joy of the Kingdom when we are impatient for its fulfillment. We are either offended or delighted by Christ's work among the blind, the lame, the poor, and the deaf. If we see ourselves as the ones who need Christ's redeeming power, we will be joyfully refreshed like a desert by new rain.

**A Prayer for Advent 3:** Lord, stir up my heart by Your presence in my life so that I may rejoice in the birth of Christ my Savior. Keep me ready to welcome Him at all times; help me live joyfully in the expectation of His coming again. Amen.