

Beloved Lord,

Thank You so much for bringing us into the season of Christmas. Thank You for the ways big and small that You have brought us through this year of uncertainty, of crazy, and of chaos by the loving provision of Your hand. Lord, thank You for the ways You greet us all, bringing us good news of great joy. Just as the angel greeted the shepherds in the fields, tending their flocks, going about the responsibilities of daily life. You met them in the midst of their work, encouraged them to not be afraid, and revealed to them the gift, the good news, the great joy, of the birth of Jesus.

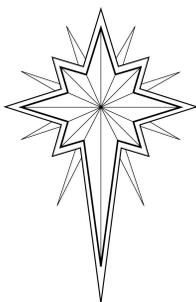
You, God, sent Christ with purpose to bring us wisdom and understanding, to bless us with Christ's sacrifice to bring us salvation and a restored relationship with You. You sent Jesus, significant and holy, right down into the insignificance of our daily world. A baby wrapped in cloth, lying in a manger, a sight to behold that would send both shepherd and wiseman alike praising God for what they had seen and heard.

Lord, You send all of us good news of great joy, the gift of Christmas, the blessing of Christ, and the message of salvation. Your holiness so lovingly lavished upon us, in the midst of our insignificance, greeting us in the fields we work in as we go about the responsibilities of our daily lives. Delivering to us the message, do not be afraid. To remind us of what Jesus said in John 16:33 to "Take heart! I have overcome the world."

Lord, there is so much going on in our times, in our jobs, in our callings, in our families, in our minds, it is so easy to become overwhelmed by it all, overpowered in both thought and feeling. In bewildering circumstances, we can turn our focus to the things in this world, and in doing so we lose sight of recognizing the work of Your hands. Lord, please shine Your heavenly light into our days. Help us to have eyes to see, ears to hear, and minds filled with wisdom and understanding.

Through the blessing of understanding, may we celebrate this Christmas with great joy. Lord, may our celebrations this year be like that of the celebration shared by Your people when Nehemiah and Ezra were instructing the people in the words of the law. The words of the law moved the people to weeping. Following this Nehemiah said in Nehemiah 8:10, *"Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."*





This was the response of the people in Nehemiah 8:12, *"Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them."* Because they understood the words that had been made known to them the people in Nehemiah's time had great joy. Because the shepherds understood the words told to them in the fields they went to Bethlehem and returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

Lord, may we have new understanding of the good news of great joy that Christmas can bring into the midst of mess in our own lives, even in the fields where we work, even in the lowly corners of empty stables. May we recognize how extraordinary You are. May we be witness to Your ability, Your power, Your anointing, Your character, Your holiness, and Your love in a way that we celebrate You with greater joy than we ever have before because we have greater understanding. May we eat & drink with deep contentment, may we send portions to those who are in need, may we glorify and praise You for all we have heard and seen as we return to our work, just like the shepherds did as they returned to their work.

Lord, may Your perfect love shine vibrantly, warmly, and cast out the fears, especially those fears dwelling deep within hearts and minds. Break like radiant dawn into those deep dark dank places where the fears of uncertainty, fears of the unseen, fears of what-ifs cast large and looming shadows. Draw into your light all those who You wish to bless this Christmas. Shine upon the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger & thirst, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted, to draw them to You. Bestow Your abundant and abounding gifts upon them; the kingdom of heaven, comfort, a filling of righteousness, mercy, vision, healing, and the family of Christ where we are known as children of God.

Lord, thank You so much for carrying us all into the Christmas season by Your goodness, through Your holiness, and with the power of Your eternal anointing! Thank You for good news of great joy! Thank You for sending a savior laid in a manger, who hung on a cross, and who overcame the world. Thank You for sealing us with the Holy Spirit and sending the Spirit to teach us, remind us, and to help us have greater understanding.

May we receive Your goodness with great joy, may we share what we have freely & generously, glorifying and praising You this Christmas. In the holy, significant, anointed name of Jesus we pray, amen.

