**He Is Good News.**

8 Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. 9 The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. 11 Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, 14 “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

15 When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” 16 They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. 18 Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. 20 The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

Luke 2:8-20 CEB

I pray that this pastoral letter will greet you with God’s Grace shining upon you this Christmas morning.

It is Christmas Day and a grand day of hope for all. For on this day we celebrate the birth of the child who gave us the opportunity to know the heart of God, and represented the host of all heavenly beings. He came to share the Good News and was Good News himself. For He was the hope we needed, and His very name has come to represent Good News, as His message of Grace has been shared from generation to generation.

Good news is definitely something we can use in our current state of affairs throughout the world. Good News is what the folks in Christ’s time needed as well. For religion had become oppressive, as the Pharisees and various Jewish leaders had built so many theological fences to gain approval with God. Modern day Christianity can do the same thing with so many rules, hoops to go through, or otherwise established by church leadership. We need to beware of this “ leaven “ that spoils the whole lump ( Galatians 5:9 ). For when church leadership allows itself to grossly over compensate for what we deem the shortcomings of Christian protection or rules to gain access to the Father’s love. We do the Body of Christ a disservice. Choking out the life of God. Forgetting that Agape Love came down from Heaven and gave us a free gift of Love, the Christ.

Remember the story of Prodigal Son. In it you read of the prodigal Son’s brother being extremely jealous of his father’s love shown to his brother, even after his brother had squandered everything his father had given him.

Representing the Heavenly Father’s love toward us in this passage of scripture, the earthly father ran to embrace him, had a feast and celebrated his coming home. Only angering the prodigal son’s brother even more. The prodigal’s brother couldn’t understand this Agape love being shown by his dad. He thought it was preposterous. His brother needed to be rebuked, chastised and reprimanded for what he had done in his eyes. He just didn’t understand what it meant to be a son. He was walking around in a slave like mentality of obedience, rather than acceptance. Thinking he had to earn his father’s favor. He just didn’t understand this concept of Father-Son, this God-Kind of Love.

That agape love ( the highest form of love ) is what the earthly father had shown toward his son. His brother unfortunately had a slave’s mentality of love. Thinking his faithfulness to father all these years, and his acts of service was what gained acceptance of the father’s love. Just because he was his son was always enough! He just didn’t see it or embrace it.

Folks we need to embrace the Good News of Jesus Christ, and accept His free gift of the cross. Forsaking our always trying to earn passage somehow by some act of faithful obedience to gain acceptance with the Father. The Lord is calling you, “Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. 29 Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. 30 My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.” Quit taking on burdens you don’t have to carry, fears and torment you have no need to worry about, apprehensions about God’s love and just go to Him, call upon His name. I promise you that just like the Prodigal Son, our Lord will run to meet you and embrace you as His own.

Church of God, forget all the hoops, requirements of man-made religion and receive the Joy of the Lord. Let Christ come to you and share His life in you. He loves you so much, and He gives us Good News in these troubling times of distress.