

## Candle In The Wind

1. Warm up: Sunday's scripture indicates that a guardian angel is assigned to each church. Jeff suggested that a church like ours probably requires an angel with an attitude – someone who's up for a challenge and not afraid of being different. He invited us to imagine what our church angel might look like – perhaps something like a punk rocker. The Bible also suggests that we, as individuals, have guardian angels. What do you picture your personal guardian angel being like?
2. This week's scripture passage tells us that the Apostle John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" worshiping when he experienced an extraordinary vision that gave him a glimpse into heaven. Read Revelation 1:9-20, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. Our scripture passage emphasizes how precious each church is in the eyes of Jesus – so precious that each not only has its own angel, but also a candlestick in his presence as a constant reminder. That reminder can be joyful or painful – kinda like a picture a parent has of an adult child. If the child is thriving, the photo is a happy reminder. If the child is struggling, the photo can be a painful reminder. How do you think Jesus feels about most churches in the world today? How do you think he feels about our church?
  - b. Just like God created each of us for specific purpose, so too God brings churches into existence for specific purposes – which raises the question why, with so many churches already in the world, God chose to bring our church into being. Jeff suggested three great purposes. The first is found in the words of Jesus commonly referred to as the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19. If you were to put the Great Mission in your own words, how would you express it? What is Jesus telling us to do?
  - c. The Great Commission is especially important for our church because **there are lots of people in the world that only a church like ours will ever be able to reach.** This is the first great purpose for which we've been called into existence. We are meant to reach the people Jesus himself was most passionate about reaching – people who are "queer," i.e., different. Most of us came to LifeJourney because we didn't fit well in other churches. What difference (or differences) made other churches an uncomfortable fit for you?
  - d. Without LifeJourney, do you think you'd be a regular church goer? Why or why not?
  - e. Jesus was accused of hanging out with the wrong kind of people – people that the religious elite called "sinners." Jesus responded, "I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners." Mark 2:17. In Jesus' culture, sinners included ordinary peasants who had deep faith and good hearts, but whose lives were too hard to

keep all the niceties of the Mosaic Code. Even shepherds were considered sinners because they often came into contact with dead animals and were, thus, ritually “unclean.” In his parable of The Lost Sheep,” Jesus describes his passion for finding those who were outside the fold. Why do you think Jesus was so passionate about reaching all these so-called sinners?

- f. Given how many people need our church, it’s imperative that we let our light shine. Who’s someone you know who really needs a church like ours? What is it about them that sets them apart from other churches? Have you invited them to church?
3. The second great reason we’ve been called into existence is to be a powerful prophetic voice in a broken world. Micah 6:8 says, “God has told you, O mortal, what is good and what does the Lord require of you? To **do justice**, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Isaiah 1:16 says, “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; learn to do good, **seek justice**, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” In other words, we should stand up for the most vulnerable in our culture.
    - a. Trans people are very vulnerable right now. Last week the Pentagon proposed to kick out any trans soldier who refuses to return to their gender assigned at birth. We will soon be putting up more “Love trans people” billboards. How do you feel about that? Is it fair to call our billboards “prophetic action?” Why or why not?
    - b. Our church is also planning to put up additional billboards with a prophetic message about Jesus’ passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, at a time when DEI is being widely abandoned. How do you feel about us delivering a prophetic DEI message? As a church, should we be so “public”?
    - c. Take a look at the attached Billboard Survey and the draft concept billboards there. Which do you like best and why? Which do you like least and why? (If you haven’t yet filled out a Billboard Survey, go to [LifeJourney.church/links](https://LifeJourney.church/links).)
    - d. Have you called your federal Senator and Representative to express yourself about an issue or issues that deeply concern you? Do you feel that’s important?
  4. **The third great reason we’ve been called into existence is to provide comfort and support for one another in times like these.** Being different in a hostile world ain’t easy, but we’ve got each other. We come to this place and find strength in numbers and hope and belonging, so we can stay strong and press forward.
    - a. How does being part of this church affect you and how you feel about life in times these?
    - b. In what way (or ways) can you help us, as a church family, be a shelter in the storm for one another?

## **Revelation 1:9-20**

---

9 I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup>saying, 'Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.' <sup>12</sup>Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. <sup>14</sup>His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup>his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup>In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force. <sup>17</sup>When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. <sup>19</sup>Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this. <sup>20</sup>As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.