

At the beginning of the services during the Advent season as we move closer and closer to Christmas worship, the children and youth will lead us in the tune “Light One Candle” by Natalie Sleeth. By now the tune will be familiar to most of you. The tune is simple and catchy and repetitive.

Light one candle for Hope, one bright candle for Hope, He brings Hope to every heart, He comes, He comes.

Light one candle for Peace. One bright Candle for peace, He bring Peace to every heart, He comes, He comes.

Light one candle for joy. One bright candle for joy every nation will find salvation in Bethle’em baby boy.

Light one candle for Love. One bright Candle for love. He brings Love for every heart. He comes, he comes.

Yet in this simple song is the truth of God’s great plan for us. Salvation come to earth in a baby boy. And for those of us who find belief in the saving work of Jesus on the cross, hope, peace, joy, and love abound. Yes, the message of salvation is clear, but perhaps the song’s greatest work is harder to find. It comes in the form of a command to light one candle.

If you are like me, the childhood tune This Little Light of Mine, I’m Gonna Let It Shine....comes to mind.

I was sitting in an African American Studies Class at the university. I loved this literature class and found all the reading a pleasure not a chore. And as you can imagine, I always had a thought or two to share about the text when I was asked. Some of the text were songs – like. “Lift Every Voice And Sing” and “Wade In The Water”. The teacher asked me one day to sing “This Little Light Of Mine” and I agreed, so I sang it just like I had learned it back in Sunday School in my little Northern American Baptist Church in Liberty Missouri, complete with “and if the devil doesn’t like it he can sit on a tack...”. You should have seen her eyes. That is not the way the song came the response from the class, as if in stereo. After I assured them that I was indeed singing it as I had learned it, and they assured me that I was wrong, the teacher invited them to sing it for me. Out of the students, both those who would share in class and those who never spoke a word, came the most soulful rendition of “This Little Light of Mine”... It was magical. After class the teacher stopped me and said “You did that on purpose, didn’t you?” I assured her I did not. Then she replied, “Yes, you did, you just wanted to get them to sing.” Really, I said, I sang it the way I had learned it. They sang it like they intended to do it.

That is the power of the song – the command and the commitment to light our candles, for hope, peace, joy, love, and Christ. The only question is whether we intend to simply sing it, or to sing it with the intent to do it.

Maybe you will bring a meal to a sick friend. Or babysit a child for a single parent. Maybe you will purchase a gift for the less fortunate, or participate in the service projects of the Feast of Sharing. Maybe you will add intentional pray for your neighbor’s, or make phone calls to the lonely. Maybe you will visit the nursing home, or make cookies for the EMS workers. Whatever you do in love, will shine a little Christmas light on those who receive it, see it, and participate in it.

Merry Christmas

