

Sermon for Christmas Eve
Saturday , December 24, 2022
“Jesus, the light of the world”

Text: Luke 2:1-20; John 1:1-14

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

There’s really not much I have to say tonight, because holy days like today and major liturgies like the one this evening speak for themselves. What you’re experiencing tonight is theology in action. Listen to the hymns. Go back and re-read the lessons. I’m glad Christmas is finally here, because I can finally fully enjoy all of the holiday music, Christmas carols, nativity scenes, and best of all, the Christmas food. Unfortunately, Christmas has been taken over by consumerism, commercialism, capitalism, and lots of other “isms.” And we hear all kinds of definitions of what Christmas is all about: gift giving, Christmas sales, Santa Claus—and the one that really irritates me: “Christmas is for the kids.” Christmas is *about* a kid, for sure: Jesus. You’ve heard that cliché saying, “Jesus is the reason for the season.” or “Put Christ back in Christmas.” Cliché though they may be, they’re absolutely right. And of course, there are the more religious things associated with the season, like lessons and carols, Advent wreaths, Advent calendars. We were told by the prophets to expect “a wonderful counselor, a mighty God, the everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.” But the Christmas theme that seems to resonate with me this year is that Jesus is the light of the world.

In addition to many of the things I see plaguing our world today, the one thing that seems to be happening to people more and more is a loss of hope. People are sinking into deeper and darker places, feeling as though they cannot escape. The world can seem like an overwhelming place. But St. John said in his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

The nativity of Christ reminds us that there is reason to have hope, because Christ’s light not only pierces the darkness, but it also gives life and it gives hope. And his light cannot be overcome, overshadowed, or extinguished. Some of you may be in a bad place today. Some of you may have experienced losses. Some may not feel as well as you’d like, or are missing your family. But, there is no reason to fear or despair, because Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

We can rejoice today, because Jesus is the light of the world. We can celebrate with revelry and singing, glad tidings and merrymaking. We can jingle our bells and deck our halls because Jesus is the light of the world. And most of all, we can walk in a clear path because we are following him who is the light of the world.

Walk in Christ’s light today. Feel God’s presence among us in the world. This child’s birth has been the topic of a season for over 2,000 years, because this is God

whose incarnation among humans we celebrate. The creator of the entire universe loved us so much that he became one of us. Where it says in John 1:14 that “the Word became flesh and lived among us,” he literally “pitched his tent,” moved in next door, as it were, to live with the beings he created. He loved us so much that he subjected himself to the vulnerability of infancy, the burden of adolescence, the evolution into adulthood. He loved us so much that he spent some of his adult years teaching humankind how to live in a better manner amongst ourselves, how to treat one another with respect, how to love one another. He loved us so much that he wanted to show us how to make this world a better place for all humanity. He came to illuminate the world, we need to listen to his teaching and walk in his light.

You know there’s an old hymn that I’ve been thinking about lately. It says, “Hark, the herald angels sing: Jesus the light of the world. Glory to the newborn king. Jesus the light of the world.”

Walk in the light, beautiful light.
Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright.
Shine all around us by day or by night:
Jesus, the light of the world.