

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Saturday, December 24, 2022, at 9:00 p.m.

“Let There Be Light”

Isaiah 9:2-7

Tonight, we heard from the prophet Isaiah: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.”

We have seen a great light: Jesus Christ is the light of the world. “A light no darkness can overcome.” The sharing of light, as we are going to do tonight, is a long-standing Christian tradition. Christians throughout the years have done this because receiving the light of Christ at Christmas is done as a reminder of God’s work in the world.

At Creation, God first said, “Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good.” To restore creation after the Fall into the darkness of sin, God sent Christ to be the Light of the world. In our Baptism, the light of Christ cleaved the darkness of our hearts. Throughout the Advent season, our Baptism and all that it brings has been an underlying theme. Contemplating our Baptism is a wonderful reminder of what Christmas is all about.

The eternal Almighty God was present here on earth as a child, and grew

into a man. This same eternal Almighty God is now present in our lives, and tonight, we share the light of the Christ candle as a reminder of that presence, just as the light of the Christ candle is shared in the baptismal ceremony. Since the creation of the world, God has demonstrated His presence through light.

This evening we are celebrating that night in Bethlehem which forever changed the world. Jesus Christ, the light of the world, entered into a dark world, and since that day, the people who were walking in darkness have seen a great light. All other supposed paths to God are but dark dead ends. Through that one birth of a child in Bethlehem, a multitude who were once dead in their sins, have been reborn to a new life through the waters of Holy Baptism.

In a little while, we will gather in the darkness of this night, and share the light of Christ symbolized in the passing of the flame from the Christ candle to each one of your candles, and greeting one another with the words, "Merry Christmas."

Where Christ is present, there is no darkness. Where Christ is not present, there is only darkness.

We are the children of light. God has said to each one of you, "Let there be light, in your heart." As I say in the baptismal ceremony, so I say to you this evening, "Live always by the light of Christ."

Tonight, we greet one another with the light of the Christ candle, just as Christians have done for centuries. In the darkness of this night, the flame of the Christ candle will spread to every person here with the greeting, “Merry Christmas.” We have heard those words and that greeting for weeks. In a few days, most of the world will stop saying “Merry Christmas” until next December.

It is like what so many people do with their relationship with God. It gets paraded out around the holidays, but then goes back on the shelf with the elf and the Christmas lights. This evening most all the world is speaking of a baby being born in Bethlehem. We are gathered this evening to speak of the child who would grow to be a man, who would lay down His life to take away our sin.

Christmas is a celebration that Christ has come. All through this Advent season, we have been reminded that He who has come is coming again. And during the past weeks, we have focused our attention on our sins being washed away in the waters of Holy Baptism. God prepared you for the coming of His Son when He shined the light of the Gospel into your heart, called you to faith, and welcomed you into His family.

The joy that we have at Christmas is not the joy of opening presents on Christmas morning. Even though there will be great anticipation and excitement in the coming hours. The joy that we have tonight and tomorrow is the joy of

Christ's tomb opening in the new light of Easter morning. Christmas is such a wonderful time of the year because of what that little child born in Bethlehem meant to the world and means to each of us here today.

Because the Son of God entered into the world, we have received the promise that our sins are forgiven. God has known you from before He uttered the words, "Let there be light," and He has prepared you from the day that you were baptized for Christ's return. He has filled you with the light of the Gospel. He has washed you clean on the inside.

The symbol of light is so powerful because light eliminates darkness. Christ is the light of the world because He eliminates the darkness of sin. The faith created in Baptism fundamentally changed who you are. You have gone from darkness to light.

Tomorrow, and the next day, and every day, continue to greet one another with the light of Christ that is within you. Let that light of Christ shine in the darkness of this world. Live always by the light of Christ. And have a Merry Christmas. Amen.