

# “Traditions Are Good”

Luke 2:1-20

Each year, we come together and we hear from the prophet Isaiah:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.” Each year, the people of God gather on Christmas Eve and wait, and watch, and hope.

The Light of the world is coming. He is 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.

We have so many traditions that surround the birth of our Lord.

Leading up to this day, we light the Advent candles – which is a good tradition. Traditions, by definition, are meant to be good. A tradition is a good or useful thing that gets passed down or taught to be put into use from generation to generation, or year to year, or even day to day – you did brush your teeth this morning, did you not? My dentist has told me that that is a good tradition.

Christmas lights hung on trees is a good tradition. Decorating your home to remind you that God entered the world as the child of Mary is a good tradition. Spread out family members traveling to meet and celebrate the birth of our Lord together builds tradition – and this is good.

Each year, on this night, I read these same words from Luke's Gospel. It is the traditional Gospel reading for this day. We already heard these words this evening spoken by the children. I cannot imagine a Children's Christmas Program without the words of Luke chapter 2. If you were here for the children's program the past few years, you will notice traditions have changed a bit.

In the past, we would always sing "All the Friendly Beasts" because we have all the friendly beasts in their costumes, and they were very cute. That was a good tradition. The past couple of years, our children's programs have been "traditional" yet somewhat different than what we have done in the past. And that is OK. Traditions are not meant to be thought of as Gospel. The Gospel is to be thought of as Gospel.

Tonight, we will sing "Silent Night". Again, I could not imagine a

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service without singing “Silent Night.” That is a tradition in most churches. Our choir sings the first verse in German. That is a good tradition.

Looking at all the traditions we have surrounding the celebration of the birth of our Lord, some of them have been done for many years. Some traditions have only been around for a few years.

When looking at Christmas traditions, it is supremely important for you to remember one thing. We are not here this evening to celebrate a tradition. We are here this evening to celebrate the Son of God entering into this world in the days of Caesar Augustus.

We are here to celebrate the work of God. God prepared His people walking in darkness for light to dawn upon them. That Son of God born in Bethlehem came for one purpose. He came to die, so that we could live. And this is “good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

He is born. He is the Son of God. He is much more than just a tradition.

Tonight we do many traditional things, both here at church and within our homes. Traditions are good when the tradition is good. A Christmas tradition is good when the tradition points to or tells of the work of Christ.

The Advent wreath marks the time of hopeful, watchful anticipation of the reality that Christ is coming. And we pray, Come Lord Jesus (which are traditional words often used by Lutherans in many circumstances).

The candles and the lights bear witness that Jesus is the Light of the World. Light has shined in your world of darkness. This is God's work in you. We are here tonight to celebrate God's work in you – His work of salvation. He is the One who entered the world. He is the One who would give Himself, His very life, for you, to redeem you from the lawlessness and selfishness and judgment that comes with being a child of Adam.

Christ had to become human, the Second Adam, so that He could take away the problems of being human caused by the first Adam. That is what we celebrate tonight. And we recognize and give thanks for all that He has done, and we do this through our many traditions. Amen.