

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Candlelight Christmas Eve
Friday, December 24, 2021 at 9:00 p.m.

“We Have Seen a Great Light”

Isaiah 9:2-7

Merry Christmas!!

Each Christmas Eve, Christ’s Church around the world presents the Christmas story and we see the fulfillment of what the prophet Isaiah foretold, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Throughout this season, we are reminded that Christ is the Light of the world. His birth was announced with the light of the Star of Bethlehem. When the angels appeared to the shepherds to announce Jesus’ birth, the light of the glory of God shone around them. Simeon will call Him, “The light of the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.”

Tonight, we hear the prophet Isaiah once again. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” But what does this mean for the world? It means good news “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” The “Seed of the woman” promised to Adam who would crush the head of Satan has come. “And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

We have seen a great light: Jesus Christ is the light of the world. The sharing of light, as we are going to do tonight, is a long-standing Christian tradition. Light is so important in the Christmas celebration, because it is so important in the history of God's relationship with His people.

From the beginning, when God created the world, the first thing that He created was light. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In the New Testament, the presence of Christ and the love of God is often referred to as light in a dark world. Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

So what does this mean for you and me? First of all, it means that the Son of God has come just as God promised to Adam in the garden. He came to crush the head of Satan and free us from the guilt of our sin. The One who spoke creation into existence and said, "Let there be light" has now come to be our Light. But our relationship with light does not end there. Jesus also says, "You are the light of the world . . . Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

St. Paul says, "if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation. The old has gone; behold, the new has come." You are a creation of God to whom God has said, "Let there be light." When you were called to faith in Baptism, God said to you, "Let there be light in your heart." You are different than you were before

Christ filled you with His light.

Light has very unique qualities. Except for the light of the Sun, most of the time we can't feel it. But it has energy. It has heat. I can remember using a light bulb as a source of heat for incubating baby chicks. If anyone gets an "Easy Bake Oven" for Christmas, they aren't like they use to be. Now it is a regular heating element. I can remember (not that I ever got one for Christmas) but back in my day, all of the heat came from an ordinary light bulb.

Light can bake cookies. Light can fill a room. Or light can shine down and illuminate just one place. When those who were walking in darkness see a great light, what happens to the darkness that was around them? It disappears. Where there is light, there can be no darkness. When you are in the light, darkness ceases to exist. Yet, a child of God can stand in the light, and it can be very clear that darkness is all around us.

On that glorious night in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, the light of the world, entered into a dark world. His birth was announced with the visible, yet insufficient light of the Bethlehem Star. But since that day, in this sinful world, the people who were walking in darkness have seen a great light.

There is nothing insufficient about the light which Christ has brought into the world. We are simply reminded far too often that those without Christ wander in deep darkness and remain in the darkness, and very often love the

darkness because they don't know anything else. They don't realize what it means to live in the light of Christ. They have not experienced the forgiveness of sins, "the yoke of [their] burden" being lifted, as Isaiah says.

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, darkness disappears. When 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." Let the light of Christ shine in you and through you for all the world to see. As Jesus says, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Tonight, we greet one another with the light of the Christ candle, just as Christians have done for centuries. Like the Star of Bethlehem, it is a visible, yet insufficient light.

We are filled with a great light – the light of Christ. May the light of Christ shine in you, and may all who see that light praise your Father in heaven. And have a Merry Christmas. Amen.