

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Tuesday, December 24, 2024, at 9:00 p.m.

“Let There Be Light”

Isaiah 9:2-7

Earlier this evening, the children presented the Christmas story and once again were privileged to tell the story of the birth of our Lord being the fulfillment of many, really all, Old Testament prophecies. As we hear each promise of the Messiah in the Old Testament, in my mind's eye, I think of each prophecy adding more and more light to this dark fallen world until finally the Light of the World Himself, the Son of God, Jesus Christ enters and the word of the prophets is fulfilled. Tonight, we begin with the words of the prophet Isaiah: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

Jesus Christ—the Light of the world – has come. The first light of the promise of salvation is given to Adam and Eve. Additional light is shed upon God's plan through the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, Micah, Zechariah – really all of them. They all point to Christ.

As the letter to the Hebrews says, “In many and various ways God spoke to the people of old through the prophets. But now He has spoken to us by His Son.” Tonight, we hear from the prophet Isaiah. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . 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, “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.”

Throughout the Advent Season, we have had the theme: “We begin with the end.” Jesus came as the child of Mary in Bethlehem, so that, as a man in

Jerusalem, He could say, "It is finished." He came to bring an end to the guilt of sin which entered into the world with Adam. In the beginning, there was light. Then the perfection of God's creation came to an end with the Fall into sin and the darkness of sin and death changed the world and changed Adam's relationship with God – and changed our relationship with God. God sent His Son to give you a new beginning by bringing an end to sin.

In the past weeks, we have heard the promise again and again that all things are made new in Christ, and "now is the day of salvation." As St. Paul says, "if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." You are a creation of God to whom God has said, "Let there be light," just as He did in the beginning. When you were called to faith in Baptism, God said to you, "Let there be light in your heart."

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 now seen a great light.

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.”

On Sunday, in my sermon, I asked the question, “What do you feel when we share the light of the Christ candle and wish one another a Merry Christmas? What do you feel as you look into the eyes of your loved ones as you share the joy of the Word of God and the light of salvation?”

The emotion you feel as we do this each year is genuine and real, because the event we celebrate tonight is genuine and real. The light of the Christ candle means so much to us because 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.

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 our Father in heaven. And have a Merry Christmas. Amen.