



**IMMANUEL EV. LUTH. CHURCH
CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2020**

Light For Our Darkness

Sunday School Christmas 2020

OPENING HYMN: CW 44, Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light

Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light,
And usher in the morning.
You shepherds, shrink not with affright
But hear the angel's warning.
This child, now weak in infancy,
Our confidence and joy shall be,
The pow'r of Satan breaking,
Our peace eternal making.

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 89, selected verses

M: I will sing of the LORD's great love forever;

C: **with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.**

M: I will declare that your love stands firm forever,

C: **that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.**

M: You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,

C: **I have sworn to David my servant, 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'"**

M: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;

C: **love and faithfulness go before you.**

M: Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,

C: **who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD.**

PRAYER

M: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that light, we may also behold him in all his glory in the life to come; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

HYMN: CW 52, On Christmas Night All Christians Sing, stanza 1 – children; stanzas 2 and 3 – congregation

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring;
On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

When sin departs before your grace,
Then life and health come in its place.
When sin departs before your grace,
Then life and health come in its place.
Angels and saints with joy may sing
All for to see the newborn King.

From out of darkness we have light
Which made the angels sing this night.
From out of darkness we have light
Which made the angels sing this night:
“Glory to God and peace to men
Now and forevermore. Amen.”

NARRATION

It might seem unusual to think of Christmas as a dark and lonely time, but for many it is just that. Tree lights and the music of the season may mean little or perhaps nothing. The hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations can darken the holiday. For some people, when they look around, they have a hard time finding meaning in—to say nothing of the true meaning for—Christmas.

Even for us, the rush of the holiday season may dim the real light of Christmas. We may lose sight of the light, which gives way to darkness. And like everyone in this world, we walk in the darkness of sin.

Sin is everywhere. It causes us to hate and hurt each other. It causes disease, war, and other acts of evil. It causes families to split apart at the seams. Eventually, it causes each and every one of us to die. We stumble daily because of sin's darkness. The prophet Isaiah put it this way: We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like people without eyes (Isaiah 59:9,10 NIVO). Our offenses are many in

your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: rebellion and treachery against the LORD, turning our backs on our God (Isaiah 59:12,13 NIVO).

Yes, sin affects all people of all time. No one can find the way to God because all are sinful. The psalmist David and the apostle John tell us: All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 14:3 NIVO). If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8 NIVO).

Sinners even love the darkness and by nature hide from God's light. Jesus tells us: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed (John 3:19,20 NIVO).

By nature, we all find ourselves in the darkness of sin, hiding from God's light.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

C: Almighty God, you created us to enjoy the light of your truth and life, but we have loved the darkness of sin. We have filled our lives with all kinds of evil. We cannot even count our sins, and by our inherited nature we try to hide from you. For these sins we are guilty and deserve to be condemned. But we appeal to your mercy. Forgive us for the sake of Jesus our Savior.

M: God knew that we were lost in the darkness of sin and death. But he did not leave us lost, hopeless, and terrified. He sent light to shine in our darkness that we would be forgiven and saved. The light from heaven is Jesus Christ, God's only Son. He came into our world to be the light of God's forgiveness. Because of Jesus' perfect life and death for us, God declares that we are not condemned for our sins. Rejoice! Your sins are forgiven!

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN: CW 34, Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

Now sing we, now rejoice, Now raise to heav'n our voice;
He from whom joy streameth Poor in a manger lies;
Not so brightly beameth The sun in yonder skies.
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!

Come from on high to me; I cannot rise to thee.
Cheer my wearied spirit, O pure and holy Child;
Through thy grace and merit, Blest Jesus, Lord most mild,
Draw me unto thee! Draw me unto thee!

Now through his Son doth shine The Father's grace divine.
Death o'er us had reigned Through sin and vanity;
He for us obtained Eternal joy on high.
May we praise him there! May we praise him there!

Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'nly ground?
Where the angels singing With all his saints unite,
Sweetest praises bringing In heav'nly joy and light.
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

NARRATION

This afternoon we celebrate the light sent from heaven at the birth of Jesus our Savior. Before the beginning of time, God planned to send his one and only Son. Jesus would come to make his home in the darkness among the lost.

The light from heaven had been promised many times before he actually appeared. Prophecies gave a glimmer of light to God's ancient people. The prophet Isaiah wrote this about the coming Messiah:

RECITATION 1-4: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9:2 NIVO)

RECITATION 5-8: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NIVO)

NARRATION

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied several months before the birth of the coming Savior: The rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace (Luke 1:78,79 NIVO).

Recall how God sent the light into this dark world as you hear again God's gracious revelation in Luke chapter 2:

RECITATION 5-8: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)³ And everyone went to his own town to register.⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line

of David.⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7 NIVO)

HYMN: CW 40, O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is, stanza 1 – 1-8; stanzas 2-5 – congregation

O Jesus Christ, Your manger is
My paradise where my soul is reclining.
For there, O Lord, We find the Word
Made flesh for us—your grace is brightly shining.

He whom the sea And wind obey
Comes down to serve the sinner in great meekness.
Now God's own Son With us is one
And joins us and our children in our weakness.

Dear Christian friend, On him depend;
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move you.
For God's own child In mercy mild
Joins you to him—how greatly God must love you!

Ponder again What glory then
The Lord will give you for your earthly sadness.
The angel host Can never boast
Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness.

The world may hold Her wealth and gold;
But you, my heart, keep Christ as your true treasure.
To him hold fast Until at last
A crown is yours and honor in full measure.

NARRATION

Lights are part of our Christmas celebration. We know it is coming when strings of lights begin to shine in homes and yards in the weeks preceding Christmas. God adorned the heavens with light on that first Christmas long ago when glorious angels appeared in the skies above Bethlehem.

RECITATION 1-4: And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. (Luke 2:8-9 NIVO)

RECITATION 5-8: But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12 NIVO)

RECITATION 1-8: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, (Luke 2:13 NIVO)

RECITATION ALL: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14 NIVO)

RECITATION 5-8: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (Luke 2:15-16 NIVO)

NARRATION

The shepherds believed the words of the angels and found everything they announced to be true. They were the first to behold the light of the world that God had sent. With their eyes they saw the baby Jesus. With their hearts they saw their Savior.

In our day, God does not reveal his saving truths in the glorious light of angel messengers. But he still adorns the world with light—the light of his precious Word of Truth in the Bible. The writer of Psalm 119, the longest psalm in the Bible, puts it this way:

RECITATION PRE AND K: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 NIVO)

NARRATION

Like the shepherds, we believe this Word, and with eyes of faith, we also see Jesus in the manger and know him to be our Savior.

HYMN: CW 68, Away in a Manger, pre and kindergarten

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with you there.

NARRATION

The excitement of seeing the holy light sent from heaven in our Savior Jesus was evident on the very night he was born. It is especially clear in the actions of the shepherds after they had seen the baby in the manger.

RECITATION 5-8: When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. (Luke 2:17-18 NIVO)

NARRATION

Like the shepherds, generations before us have shared this good news so that now we too have heard what God has said concerning this child. Jesus became one of us. He lived a holy life. He died to pay the price for our sins. He rose from the dead, securing victory over death for us. And he ascended to the glory of heaven where he rules forever. Everything in Jesus' life happened just as the Scriptures promised! Jesus proclaimed himself to be the light for all to follow. John writes: When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12 NIVO). I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness (John 12:46 NIVO).

The greatest gift found in the light of Jesus is our redemption from sin and death. Even when we were lost in spiritual darkness, God rescued us. Jesus explained this most clearly to Nicodemus when he said:

RECITATION ALL: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NI-VO)

HYMN: CW 60, Silent Night! Holy Night, stanza 1 in German and English, children, stanzas 2,3 – congregation

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traute hoch heilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

RESPONSIVE READING FROM JOHN 1 (pastor, children and congregation)

M: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

SS: He was with God in the beginning.

M: Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.
C: **In him was life, and that life was the light of men.**
M: The light shines in the darkness,
SS: but the darkness has not understood it.
M: There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe
C: **The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.**
M: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
All: **We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

PRAYER

M: Shine forth, dear Jesus, Light of the world, on all who walk in darkness. Grant us your grace to be your torchbearers telling the world of your love. Open the eyes of all to see your light and follow you to eternal glory. We ask this for your love's sake, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C: **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING

CLOSING HYMN: CW 61, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all you nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain:

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail th' incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!

Refrain

Hail, the heav'nly Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, Ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, Born to give us second birth.
Refrain

Thank You: We thank everyone who helped to make today a special day to proclaim the gospel message of Christ Jesus. We especially thank Tom Schroer for planning, preparing and directing the service; Maria Claussen for accompanying the children; Joanne Malkuch for playing the organ; Chase Marxhausen, Bria Marxhausen and Logan Wold for serving as narrators; and the Sunday school teachers for helping the children prepare.