

Christmas Day

Light and Purity *Christ's Candle*

Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.
³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.
⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.
⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.
⁶ 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.
⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Psalm 96

¹ Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
² Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
⁴ For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.
⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations,
asccribe to the Lord glory and strength.

⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.

⁹ Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.

¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.

¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.

¹² Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

¹³ Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes,
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Luke 2:1-14

2 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 their 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 guest room available for them.

⁸ 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. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Reflection:

The world is full of darkness, even with the invention of LED lights. This darkness shows itself in the selfishness and pride that cause people to fight constantly with others. But the light of Christmas has come, calling for peace and offering the gift of the Prince of Peace. Isaiah the prophet experienced much pain and warfare during his lifetime. Israel of his day was divided along political, ethnic, and religious lines, much like our world today. Foreign nations constantly threatened the people. Poor leadership resulted in economic problems. All these often resulted in social unrest. Not much has changed in human nature.

Isaiah saw far into the future when a child would be born. We celebrate the birth of this child on this day, although we know this is not the actual day of Jesus' birth. Every day should be a celebration for us that the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace has come into this world. We may look at the world today and wonder what difference God is making. Churches are struggling under covid restrictions. People are suffering from a disease that is difficult to cure. We have much that can discourage us. But the kingdom established by Jesus, the King of kings, is eternal and it is breaking into this world. We can be participants with it if we will put our trust in God's promises.

These promises were fulfilled long ago in the small town of Bethlehem. The shepherds who were simply doing their job out in the fields heard the angels proclaim glory to God and the arrival of true peace to the earth. Sadly, many people reject this glory and do not experience the peace of God. They remain in darkness, trapped by their own doubts and fears.

What happens when we trust in Jesus? We can read Psalm 96 with the sincerity of heartfelt praise. We can have this peace that passes human

understanding because we have allowed the light of the Messiah to shine in the darkness of our souls. When we feel lost in the dark, praising God will lift us up and help us to refocus so we can see the Light of the World.

This is all because of God's amazing grace. Paul reminded his close friend, Titus, of this. This grace appeared at just the right time in history. Grace changes us and helps us to live the way God intends for us to live. Christmas is not only about looking to the past. It is also about looking to the future, for the second advent of Jesus' coming. We look forward to the appearing of God's glory once more when our Savior comes on the clouds to take us to our true home.

Prayer:

1. Praise God for His sustain grace and power in your life during this very different Christmas season.
2. Do you have unconfessed sins, bad attitudes, love conditioned by situations or emotions, or uncompassionate thoughts towards those in need? Confess any struggle you have had lately in overcoming the darkness in your life.
3. Imagine yourself one of the shepherds who saw the newborn Baby Jesus laying in a manager. How would you respond to this scene?
4. Commit yourself to being an open channel of God's grace in 2021. Ask God for specific leading for ways you can participate in the lives of those around you.
5. Confess your faith in the Christ of Christmas with this statement (if you cannot say it with honesty, then make this your prayer):

Jesus, thank you for coming into the world and bringing salvation to me. I know I am not worthy of this salvation but I am thankful it is offered to me freely. I receive this gift and return my life to you. Shine your light into my life. Show me the path you want me to take. Give me the strength to live as your servant, even when the darkness tries to overwhelm me. I need your strength. Please send your Holy Spirit to guide me and help me to live victoriously and peacefully. Amen!