

# COVENANT LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF OKLAHOMA CITY



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This is a version of my sermon text for our **Midnight Christ Mass, on December 24, 2018**. The texts for my message were Luke 2:6-14 and John 1:1-4, 9-14. + pBRC

*May you always know how much God loves & treasures you. AMEN.*

The Gospels contain very different stories about Jesus' birth.

Luke, with an assist from Matthew, tells the story we know best. Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem because of the census. There is no place for them to stay, so she gives birth to her baby amongst the animals, and lays him in a feeding trough for his first crib. Matthew adds in the Wise Men and the escape as refugees to Egypt from the insane tyrannical ruler.

This is the story we know and that is at the focus of our celebrations during this time of the year.

But John begins differently. John begins back at THE Beginning. John also gives away the ending, because that's the type of Gospel writer that John is. But in the Spoilers that John gives us are the true Good News of Great Joy.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

John tells us everything that ever existed came into being by the Word, the Word that was with God and the Word that was God. The Word created life. The Word is the Light for all people. And that Light was coming into the world.

The creative force that created literally everything was coming into the world. The bang in the Big Bang was coming into the world. The knitter that knit the first strands of DNA together was coming into the world. The hand that placed the stars in the sky, and the hand that planted the seeds, was coming into the world.

That is certainly Good News, and should cause Great Joy, right?



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The celestial army certainly thought so. They sent a messenger to make the proclamation; not to Caesar, nor to kings, nor to the rich and powerful in their palaces of gold. But to simple people, to those who needed to know that God cares about them and for them.

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

The One whom had been promised, a Savior, a Messiah, the Lord had been born. The Word became flesh and lived among us.

This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

The Word that spoke existence into being was born not into wealth, or power, or at a huge estate, but he was wrapped in rags and slept in a feeding trough. God took on human form and flesh, took on our existence, starting not at the top, but at the bottom. Because Christ came for us all.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The Good News of Great Joy the angels proclaimed to the shepherds is that God sent a light to shine into the darkness. It doesn't matter if that darkness is caused by illness, depression, isolation, addiction or rejections; darkness brought by abuse, bullying, mistreatment, exploitation, discrimination, or harassment; darkness that comes from financial or economic problems, identity issues, relationship difficulties, family struggles or the various things life throws in our way.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

That baby, born in a stable, wrapped in rags, beginning life at the bottom is the hope of the world. Through Him, death is defeated and our sins are swept away. Through Him, God expresses the ultimate sign of love, totally giving of one's self, even to death, a death on a cross.

But beyond that, Christ is a light shining into OUR darkness, a light to remind us that we are beloved by God, no matter what.

No matter how much the darkness grabs at us, how much it surrounds and swallows us, there is a light that shines into the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. I love the description of Jesus as light coming to defeat darkness because it is easy to explain in both a simple way, and in a totally nerdy way.

Think of a room in your house or someone else's house, or maybe at work. Think of an interior room, with no windows, one where the only way light can get into the room is by

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being brought into it. The room can only be lit by a light bulb or a candle, or by the flashlight app on your phone. What happens when you go into that room, and you don't bring any light? Some how, light makes its way in. Whether through the crack of the door, or reflected from somewhere, light gets into the darkest places.

Here's the nerdy version of that. Light acts as both a particle and as a wave. It has the physical properties of matter, which is why light reflects off a mirror and other objects. But light also has the property of waves, which can penetrate matter, and bend around objects. It shouldn't do that. Things are either matter or waves, not both.

Light is. Light exists in both states. Because Light is persistent. Light goes where it wants to go, and illuminates what it wants to.

It is both human and divine. It is both mortal and immortal. It is infinite and it is encased in flesh.

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

God's love burst into the world in that baby born in Bethlehem. God's love shattered the suffocation that sin inflicts on us. God's love destroys the dominion of death. Nothing can separate us from God's love.

The light of God is life for the world, and nothing can stop it. Darkness is defeated by the Light. Death is destroyed by the Light. The distance that we put between ourselves and God because of our sin is diminished by the Light.

The Light came to fulfill the ancient promises God made to Abraham and Sarah and their families. Even though the leaders of the people chose to be first blessed did not receive Jesus, the Light persevered.

He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

All that we need to do is to believe, to trust, to have faith that God loves us. All we have to do is believe in the Light.

On those days, and we all have them, when the Darkness is winning, when things are going from bad to worse, on those days when everything is a struggle, we need only to believe in the Light.

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And on those days when the Darkness is kicking our asses, and everything is closing in on us, and there seems to be no way out and no one on our side, we need to find the strength to believe in the Light. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Remember, all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. Everyone and everything is a beloved creation of God. If you feel unloved, have been told you are unloved, or struggle to love yourself, God loves you. God shines as a light in the darkness, to remind you that you are loved. And God invites you to love others, because God loves you.

And that is Good News of Great Joy for All the people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Believe in the Light. Merry Christmas and AMEN.