

Christmas Day is here, and I can truly say there is no place I'd rather be than here with you all as we celebrate. Today, we remember the most important moment in all human history, the moment that God became a human, putting aside God's glory and sacrificing himself just to save us, God's creations who had willfully rebelled. And what better place to celebrate than with people who understand the gravity of this day, who can confess with me that today is the day that Jesus Christ, God's only son, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost was born of the Virgin Mary to save us all. Truly there is no place I'd rather be.

True as I am sure that is for all of you, and as sure as I am that you would all love to hear an extra-long sermon today, I have heard the groaning of the people and I will be keeping things short. Don't worry, soon you'll be on your way to dinners and hallmark Christmas movies and a sea of wrapping paper, or whatever fun activities await.

John's prologue beautifully teaches us just how momentous this day truly is, the day that Christ was born. Prior to his birth, we were lost in the darkness. No matter how we tried, we could not bridge the chasm which had been created. We could not keep the law, and our hearts turned to darkness constantly, no matter how we fought them. We were each condemned to death. But God so loved us that God willingly entered the darkness to bring us into the light. And the light of this day is made all the brighter by the darkness we had known.

If you've visited a cave, you've probably had the experience of the guide turning out all the lights to show you what total darkness is like. You truly cannot see your own hands in front of your face. In this state of total darkness, even a small light can travel a long way. And if you are lost in that darkness, that small light may not show every step along the way, but it can guide you to it.

So it was when two thousand years ago a baby was born to a poor, scandalized girl. There seems to have been nothing so astounding about this child that the people of Bethlehem even noticed his arrival. They could not even be bothered to make room for a laboring woman and her baby. Yet for those who could perceive it, this baby was the light shining in the darkness that would lead all people home.

Nearby, shepherds were watching their flocks in the long, dark night, when suddenly they saw the light of heaven, the angels singing in joy and triumph. When the angels were once again hidden from view, the shepherds hurried to find this light in the darkness, this tiny baby, whose arrival could flood the sky with angelic light. It is the coming of this little light, this child, that we celebrate today.

The thing about this light, is that the darkness could not overcome it. No candle can burn forever, neither can any star. If the universe were left alone to its own devices, eventually it would be swallowed up by absolute darkness as the stars burned up their fuel. But the light of Christ is different in that it does not end, it

grows and spreads. Christ's birth passed by with little notice, but his life, death and resurrection was noticed by many.

With a few short decades, Jewish and Roman historians wrote about him. People who were against Christianity had no doubt as to his existence and knew of his life and major works. Within a few decades, the Gospel of Christ had been carried to ends of the earth. In the first three hundred years, Christianity gained several million followers by our best estimates. And far from burning out, the light just grew. In fact, the more evil rulers tried to stamp it out, the more the embers spread and caught fire, leading Tertullian to write that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The more the darkness raged and blew, the stronger the light of Christ grew and spread.

Christ still shines in the darkness, even today. As we face a new year, it is impossible to say what we might face, especially given the trajectory of the past few years, but one thing is certain; the darkness will not overcome the light of Christ. Christ will continue to shine, no matter how dark things look, no matter what caves we find ourselves in, we need only to look for the light and to pursue it. When we focus on the light of Christ, we not know every step along the way, but we will always be heading in the right direction.

Most importantly, we are not to keep this light to ourselves. We have received so much and so freely from God, who became flesh and dwelled among us, and we

are meant to shine our light as well, pointing the way to God. When you strive to shine your light before humanity, you might well be the only small light in someone's darkness. So shine, don't let your light stay hidden, and don't neglect it when the good cheer of Christmas fades. Find a way to share the light of God each and every day. Chase away the darkness with the light of Christ where ever it is found. Be the light that pints to the child born and the king returning.

Friends, as we go from here and continue our celebrations, let us remember that one small light can flood the world, and each and every one of us share our light today and every day in the future, lighting the way to baby in a manger, and to the triumphant king's return. Amen.

Rev. Kate Mauch

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