

First Sunday of Christmas  
December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015

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Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3, Galatians 3:23-25, 4:4-7, John 1:1-18

“Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives.”

Today, the first Sunday in the season of Christmas, we are gifted with one of the most beautiful and beloved passages of Holy Scripture: the opening of the Gospel according to St. John.

“In the beginning was the Word” – the Word of God – Jesus, the Son of God.

“And the Word was with God, and the Word was God” Here John meditates on the Mystery of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son of God came to earth as a human, to live, and teach, and heal, and die for us, and rise again for us. And although he had a human body and soul, yet Jesus was God. His whole being was one with the Being who made the universe.

“All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” Jesus is God, and he took and takes part in the creative work of God. He is the word spoken at the beginning of creation: “Let there be light.” God’s Word, God’s Being, and God’s creative act are not separate. Jesus created the light. He created all life.

And Jesus is “the light of the world”. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

And then, one of my very favorite Scripture verses and images: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

I love the image of the light shining in the darkness. God come to Earth, the Baby Jesus, is this light of hope shining in our often dark and sometimes hopeless world.

The child in the manger is the light of love – the endless, constant love of God reaching out to us humans even in our brokenness, our sin and imperfections, our selfishness and self-isolation. This child is God’s love, reaching out to us who only sometimes remember how to love. Who so often must face our own actions of cruelty, and the ways we hurt even those we love.

But despite our imperfections, despite the ways we fail to love, God’s light breaks shining through our darkness, leading us back to love. Back to caring for each other, apologizing for the thoughtless words and careless pains we inflict on each other.

God is the light of hope and love that draws us, again and again, back to peace and reconciliation with our loved ones. He draws us back to hope because love, not hatred, triumphs in the end.

I think of this image of light shining in the darkness a lot in this season. I love to pass houses decorated with a lit candle in each window - little lights twinkling in the dark of early winter

evenings. Points of light that make me think of this phrase, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”.

But I was struck by our opening prayer, our opening collect today, which is a somewhat different image of light. Usually when I think of light in the darkness at Christmas time I think of a single, bright candle burning in the dark. But the collect describes something else:

“Almighty God,” we pray, “you have poured upon us the light of your incarnate Word.” This prayer is taking about something more like a flood. A flood of light pouring down on us, because God came to live among us as a human.

I’m imagining a waterfall, this gushing river of light, that is the light of God’s vast, overwhelming, incredible love for us.

God’s love is a flood of light that scatters the darkness. A flood that can fill our hearts with that overwhelming thrill of love and joy that we can feel so strongly in the Christmas season. That thrill of being loved, and of giving love.

It’s a love and joy that makes us want to give and to forgive. That makes us want to care for our family and friends, and for those less fortunate than us.

It is this flood of God’s love, this wave of joy, and peace, and hope that we celebrate in the waters of baptism. The birth of a child is a miracle of love and joy and hope. And this evening we will bring a child to the baptismal font to celebrate not only our love for her, but God’s vast love for her. Our hopes and dreams for her, and God’s hope and plan and call to her.

And every baptism reminds us of our own baptisms, and God’s love and hope and plan and call to each of us.

Each of us in our own baptisms has a profound encounter with the living, loving, life-giving God who calls us to Him to be loved and to spread His love throughout the world.

And so like this child today, we are anointed and sent to share the light of love with the world. And who knows what incredible ways the love we share may scatter the darkness and bring light to the world.

Amen.