

Sermon Title: The Great Light Has Shined
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Dec. 24, 2025, Christmas Eve

Prelude

Welcome —> to St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Ottawa
We are a caring community of faith in the heart of the Glebe.
—> Paul Wu, minister, worship leader

Christmas Eve candle light service

- > pick up a personal candle
- > offering collected will go to Ottawa Mission (with Mission Tree)
- > greeting to those on Teleconference and Zoom

Call to Worship

Voice 1: In a land ruled by an empire, under the weight
of oppression, a young couple search for a place
for Mary to give birth, but there was no room at the inn.

Voice 2: In the humblest of places, the promised child is born!

Voice 1: In lowly circumstances, God fulfills the promise
to all people. This is the meeting of heaven and earth!

Voice 2: The glorious light of that stable burst into the night,
announcing a birth that has changed the world.

All: On this night, we light the Christ candle.

(The Christ candle is lit.)

Let us pray together:

Living God, may the light of Christ find a home in our hearts, in our
congregations and in our world. Hallelujah! Christ is born! **Amen.**

Hymn 159 Oh come, all ye faithful (verse 1, 2, 3 and 4)

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Prayer of Adoration

God of mystery and wonder, Creator, Christ and Spirit.
On this holy night, the angels sing your praises with great joy.
The shepherds welcome your saving love, born in a manger.
Mary and Joseph ponder your promise, cradled in their arms.
Glory to you, O God, for such gifts entrusted to us in Christ Jesus!
And so we come to praise you, singing with the angels,
amazed like the shepherds, cradling the Christ Child
in our hearts once again.
Glory to you, O God, Source of Light and Love for all people.

Unison Prayer of Confession

**God of grace and mercy,
you have given us the greatest gift of all, your Son Jesus,
but we confess even the pressure to give distracts us.
Jesus was born in human flesh,
but we fail to see the dignity in the human lives around us.
Forgive us, O God, and help us cherish the true meaning
of all you offer us each and every day
in the child in the manger.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power
and the glory, forever. Amen**

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Assurance of Pardon

The angel of the Lord assured Joseph
he should take Mary as his wife, because her son,
to be called Jesus, would save God's people from their sins.

This night, receive the gift of God's forgiveness,
offered in Christ Jesus.
Know this gift is for you
and share it with others in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

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Scripture (Daisy, Justin)

First Reading Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Great will be his authority,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Hymn 143 Infant holy, Infant lowly

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Psalm 96 (with refrain 1)

Second Reading Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

Hymn 149 Away in a manger

Third Reading Luke 2: 8-14

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, 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 Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!*"

Reader: This is the word of the Lord
 People: **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn 138 While shepherds watched

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Sermon

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

It should've been an unremarkable birth—
a travel weary couple of lowly status,
giving birth to a baby boy in a manger.

That which is ordinary fills the room—
sweat, blood, blanket, make-shift diaper,
and the raw joy that expectant parents feel in their hearts.

They were far from home, having to travel great distance
in order to register in the ancestral town of Bethlehem .

There were no attendants present,
no midwives available; no relatives helping;
there wasn't even any room at the inn.

There was certainly no expectation of visitors of any kind,
but they came nonetheless.

What appeared to be lowly and ordinary is anything but.
For the infant lowly is infant holy, the Son of God,
the Lord of all lords and the King of all kings.

So we sing hymn 143, verse 1:

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift and winging angels singing, novels ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is Lord of all. Christ the babe is Lord of all.

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Ordinary shepherds were living in the field near by.

It was a humble vocation, an honest work
with low pay, low return and plenty of risk—
in fending off wild beasts and all that.

The shepherds were watching their flock by night—
the day's work is done, the night approaches,
a small fire may have kept them warm,
but not enough to ward off encroaching darkness.
They were settling in for the night.

Then suddenly, a bright light shone around them,
and an angelic messenger of the Lord stood before them,
and brought to them good news of great joy for all people:
“to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,
who is the Messiah, the Lord!”

A sign was given: a child wrapped in bands of cloth
and lying in a manger.

As soon as the message was delivered,
a heavenly chorus broke out:
Gloria! In excelsis deo!
Glory to God in the highest heaven,
And peace! Peace on earth
among those whom God favours!

So hurriedly they set out to see.

So we sing in verse 2 of hymn 143,

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new,
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you. Christ the babe was born for you.

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The child they found was but a child, unremarkable.
Watching him sleeping contently on his mother's lap,
one ought not to have given him a second thought.

As we sing in hymn 149, verse 1

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.

But he is anything but ordinary,
for he is the embodiment of the words of prophets,

As we read in Isaiah 9:2

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

The light has indeed shined,
but darkness has yet to release its sway.

The darkness described in the Isaiah passage
is not of the natural variety, but of the immense human sufferings
experienced by humanity.

For the Israelites, it may point to the exile,
to the Babylonian captivity,
but it needs not be so limited.

Humanity has known captivities, oppressions and sufferings
since the Fall, since the time when sin entered
into our collective consciousness.

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The disruption of our relationship to our Creator
 has resulted in a ball of confusion in how we relate to one another.
 We give it nice sounding names, like
 'survival of the fittest', 'running the rat race',
 'climbing the corporate ladder',
 or 'the rule of 20-80',

Where twenty percent of the population
 naturally ends up with eighty percent of wealth,
 or in our present days is more like
 the 1% controlling 99% of everything.

It is just like what was sung by that 80's rock band Love and Rocket:

Well, the only person talking about love today is the preacher.
 And it seems nobody's interested in learning but the teacher.
 Segregation, determination, demonstration, integration,
 aggravation, humiliation, devastation of our nation.
 Ball of confusion. That's what the world is today, hey, hey.
 Ball of confusion. That's what the world is today, hey, hey.

It is to this ball of confusion entered the Christ-child,
 like the first ray of sunshine
 piercing through the horizon of dawn,
 the night sky may still hold sway,
 but it inevitably will yield,
 to the noon-day-bright.

So we sing in verse 2 of hymn 149:

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.

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This ordinary looking child is extraordinary indeed.

For he is God's presence in the affairs of humanity;
he is God's gift to us, and unto him,
might things shall be done.

For, as the prophet prophesied, in Isaiah 9:6

A child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

So we sing in hymn 139, verse 1

Hark! The herald angels sing, glory to the new-born King,
peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations rise; join the triumph of the skies,
with the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the new born King.

And again we conclude in verse 3 of the same hymn,

Hail! The heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light of life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild, he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise the lost of earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the new born King.

And the people of God say Amen. Amen. Hallelujah. Amen!

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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Prayers of the People

O Holy One, heavenly angels spoke to earthly shepherds
and eternity entered time in the child of Bethlehem.

In this season of Christmas,
we give you thanks that your love took flesh in the Christ child
and that his story still fills us with wonder.
With all the hectic visiting family and friends this season,
we remember Mary and Joseph and their journey
in the midst of another busy time.
Watch over all who travel at this time of year,
for happy reasons or difficult challenges.
May they find your peace in the midst of their journeys.

As we remember the innkeeper
who found space for Mary and Joseph,
we are grateful for the spaces we call home,
whether simple or sophisticated.
We pray for all those who are homeless,
and those who seek a welcome in strange places.
May they find an open door and kindness within.

As we remember the shepherds watching over their flocks,
we give you thanks for those who watch over us this night.
We pray for all those who must work on holidays,
tending to the well-being of others.
May they know a blessing in the services they provide
and our gratitude for their efforts.

As we remember the angels
and their message of peace and goodwill,
we are grateful for peace and order in our communities.
We pray for all those who work to establish and maintain peace
in troubled places and troubled lives,
knowing trouble rarely takes a vacation.

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O God of glory,
your splendour shines from a manger in Bethlehem,
where the light of the world is humbly born
into the darkness of human night.
Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world,
so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice,
and defenders of all for whom there is no room.

Hear these prayers and all the silent prayers of our hearts,
O God, and cradle them and us in your holy wisdom,
In the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen.**

Hymn 154 Silent Night

Christmas Tableau

Hymn 139 Hark! The Herald angels sing

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all. **Amen.**

Postlude