



BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study

The Christ Mass

People of the Dawn

The Light that embraces us all

DECEMBER 25TH, 2025

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A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Revised Common Lectionary Related

The Christ Mass

Isaiah 9:2-7;

Psalm 96;

Titus 2:11-14;

Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

O God, who makest us glad with the
yearly remembrance of the birth of
thy only Son, Jesus Christ:
Grant that as we joyfully receive him
for our redeemer,
so we may with sure confidence behold him,
when he shall come to be our judge:
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the
Holy Ghost, one God,
world without end.

INTRODUCTION

Can light truly break through your darkest moments? Christ's birth assures us that no night is light-proof, gently illuminating even our deepest darkness in a world shadowed amid conflict and personal struggles. Through the wonder of a shepherd and the awe of a darkened sky, an ancient promise quietly unfolds, giving hope not as a sudden blaze, but as a constant glow.

There were times during the year that were particularly challenging for me. I remember a small, still, profound moment of light that carried greater meaning than I first realised. I was in a moment of darkness, struggling with emotions of detachment and sadness, when a friend unexpectedly asked the simple question, "Are you okay? You definitely don't seem happy." Their willingness to truly listen allowed me to express emotions I had been suppressing, reminding me not only of the kindness that surrounds us but also how sincere connection can break through states of aloneness and despair.

Looking back on this now, I remember biblical assurances such as Isaiah 9:2, which declares, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light," suggesting that acts of compassion can be manifestations of the divine light in our daily lives. This experience helped me see the importance of making contact and being vulnerable, both in seeking support and in offering it to others.

This modest action of compassion was a demonstration of the light that Christ's birth represents, bringing peace into our lives during bleak times. Whether you carry hidden burdens or simply long for meaning this season, the Christmas story invites us to see how God's light holds all things and all people together. In the calm of a humble manger, heaven draws near to earth, and hope is born, quietly transforming both the magnitude of creation and the intimacy of the human heart. Here, we are invited to let this divine light gently guide our way forward.

What if the darkest nights are precisely in which hope chooses to shine? At this holy season of the year, especially in the wake of sorrowful events, a subtle glow comes, not when life is tidy, but when we are most in need. Isaiah's prophecy and Luke's telling of the nativity speak of a quiet interruption: God entering our world, not with force, but with tenderness, meeting us amid our struggles and silent burdens. The image of the Southern Lights and the still arrangement of stones at the altar become reminders that God's light, born in the vulnerability of an infant, will not be overcome by shadows.

As 2025 draws to a close and hardship persists in our communities, Christmas invites us not simply to remember a past miracle, but to receive and reflect Christ's subtle light now. With gentleness rather than urgency, we are sent to carry that light in places hope is most fragile—through a listening ear, a simple kindness, time given in service, or a candle lit in prayer—so that others may know that even amidst darkness, light is quietly at work.

As we walk lightly on sacred ground,
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

People of the Dawn –

The Light That Embraces us All

Isaiah 9:2-7;

Psalm 96;

Titus 2:11-14;

Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

On this holy night, we gather with candles, with familiar words and sacred melodies, because we know—deep down—that darkness does not get the final say. The Scriptures we have heard tonight speak with one voice: light breaks in. Not because the world is ready for it, not because everything is calm and ordered, but precisely because it is not.

Isaiah's words are spoken inside a world that knows oppression, weariness, and fear:

**“The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.”**

Notice what kind of darkness this is. It is not simply the absence of light; it is the darkness of people who have been walking, living, enduring, carrying burdens.

A week on, after the candles continue to burn for those who died in recent terror attacks, be they here in Australia, the United States, or, unfortunately, multiple occurrences in South Africa. There are parts of the world still in conflict, bloody conflict, and many countries laid waste through violence. And then, there is the darkness that some of us carry with us through our own lives. Although we may feel isolated at times, many are walking, living, enduring, carrying their burdens, and feel forsaken.

At the foot of the candles here, 15 stones are placed to

remind us of our connectedness with our Creator God. From the earth we came, unto the earth we return. Words sometimes fail us, but a simple act of placing a rock in a sacred space can help remind us that we are God's creation, and that no matter what we endure, God is with us.

Indeed, that is why this night is so important. We celebrate the coming of Emmanuel, God-with-us. We remember how, in the still of the night, a baby was born in a place that is no stranger to violence. The impoverished beginnings of the story of Jesus, the one who saves, interrupted the night in Bethlehem and have continued to interrupt other dark places across the world.

St John's gospel tells us of the 'light coming into the world'. In the first book of Moses, the separation of brightness and gloom heralds creation. That light, fully present in God's love for us, provides a counterpoint to the dark places and encourages us to share it with others, especially when their burdens or concerns envelop them in a sense of darkness and aloneness.

And the light that comes is not tentative or fragile. Isaiah calls it great. It does more than decorate the darkness; it interrupts it. It re-names it. It changes what is possible.

That same interruption happens in Luke's Gospel. The shepherds are doing what they always do—working the night shift, watching, waiting, keeping danger at bay. Then suddenly, without warning, the ordinary night is torn open. The glory of the Lord shines around them—no wonder they are terrified.

On the advertising for Christmas, and indeed, on the cover of our order of service tonight, is a disruptive moment in our own skies a few weeks back. Bursts of colour resulting from a massive solar storm broke into our world. Imagine for a moment if you did not know about the Southern Lights. Imagine if you heard a commotion and looked up to see the

sky green, pink, white, and glowing.

It can be easy to see how the shepherds responded to the glow they saw; it would have been overwhelming. Yet the first word spoken into that fear is not judgment, but reassurance: “Do not be afraid.”

That is how God’s light works. It tells the truth about the darkness—without denying it—but refuses to let fear control the story. “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” Not for the powerful first, not for the confident or the well-prepared, but for those on the margins, those awake in the night, those unsure what tomorrow will bring.

St Paul, writing to Titus, describes this moment with beautiful simplicity: “The grace of God has appeared.” Grace appears. Like dawn. Like light that cannot be hidden behind clouds forever. Grace does not wait for us to get our act together; it arrives. It teaches us how to live, not by fear or force, but by hope—training us to live lives formed by love, justice, and self-giving.

And here is the heart of the mystery of Christmas: this light is not an idea, not a feeling, not a moral improvement plan. This light is a child. Wrapped in cloth and laid in a feeding trough. The light that holds the universe together chooses to be held in human arms. Heaven and earth are drawn together, not by spectacle, but by vulnerability.

Psalm 96 invites the whole creation to rejoice—to sing, to praise, to declare God’s glory among the nations. Christmas is not a private comfort; it is a heavenly announcement. The light of Christ holds together angels and shepherds, empires and infants, past promises and future hope. It holds together justice and mercy, truth and tenderness.

And so tonight, Christmas is not only something we remember; it is something we receive. The light comes into our darkness. Into the places we would rather keep hidden. Into grief that still aches, relationships that are strained, fears we carry quietly, and uncertainties about what lies ahead. The promise of Christmas is not that the darkness disappears instantly, but that it is no longer alone.

And we are not meant to keep this light to ourselves. Candles only make sense when they are shared. We are called to reflect this light—in kindness offered when it would be easier to walk past, with forbearance when tempers are short, in courage when faith feels costly. We carry Christ’s light into homes, workplaces, schools, and communities that often settle for shadows because they have forgotten that something brighter is possible.

For us, deep into the end of 2025, we recall the beginning of God-with-us. With an intense sense of sadness and irony, we also remember the blackness that parts of our world are in. As a sign of togetherness, people of many faiths have stood together with the burdened and saddened, seeking to bring more light into our troubled world.

St John reminds us that in the Hymn to the Word, there is an eternal truth. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness cannot contain it. It spreads. It illumines. It additionally reveals the shadows, but for us, this light includes hope, peace, joy and love. And love, born in Bethlehem so long ago, continues to lift its countenance upon us, and we behold it now with grace upon grace.

Tonight, as we sing with the angels, we remember this enduring truth: no darkness is too deep, no night too long, no life beyond God’s reach. The light of Christ holds it all—and it embraces us.

***Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours.***

The sermon mentions that light 'interrupts' and 're-names' darkness rather than just decorating it. What do you think this means in the context of how God's light works in our lives?

- The sermon says, 'And the light that comes is not tentative or fragile. Isaiah calls it great. It does not merely decorate the darkness; it interrupts it. It re-names it. It changes what is possible.'
- Can you think of a time when God's light 'interrupted' a dark period in your life and changed what you thought was possible?

In Isaiah 9:2, we read 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.' How does this ancient prophecy still relate to our modern experiences of darkness and light?

- The sermon explains that this darkness isn't just the absence of light, but refers to people who are 'living, enduring, carrying burdens.'
- What burdens are you currently carrying that need to be brought into God's light?

The sermon describes Christmas light as 'not an idea, not a feeling, not a moral improvement plan' but as a child. Why is it significant that God chose to bring light into the world through the vulnerability of a baby?

- 'The light that holds the universe together chooses to be held in human arms.'
- How does understanding Jesus' vulnerability as a baby change your perspective on showing vulnerability in your own faith journey?

The sermon states that 'Christmas is not a private comfort; it is a cosmic announcement.' What responsibilities does this place on us as Christians in how we share Christ's light?

- The sermon mentions carrying Christ's light into 'homes, workplaces, schools, and communities that often settle for shadows because they have forgotten that something brighter is possible.'
- In what specific ways can you be a bearer of Christ's light in the places where you spend most of your time?

How does the sermon's message about light breaking into darkness speak to both personal struggles and larger global conflicts?

- The sermon references recent terror attacks, global conflicts, and personal burdens, stating that 'no darkness is too deep, no night too long, no life beyond God's reach.'
- When you see darkness around you, how can you maintain hope in the light of Christ while also taking action to help others?

Adult Guide

Here are questions and gentle prompts to help you carry Sunday's light into the days that follow.

Sermon Summary

If you missed Christmas Eve, or if you want to remember, here is a glimpse of what we shared together.

We listened to the story of light breaking into darkness. Christmas is the moment when Jesus, the light of the world, steps into our shadows. Isaiah says: people walking in darkness have seen a great light. This light does not simply decorate the night; it transforms it. We remembered that Emmanuel, God with us, is present in every struggle—across the world and in our own hearts. We are invited to share this light: with kindness, with patience, with courage. We are called to carry hope and love into a world that often settles for shadows.

Conversation Starters

Here are ways to keep the conversation alive, to let the Christmas story echo through the week with your children.

* During a car ride

- How do you think the light of Christ can help us when we're afraid of the dark?
- This question is inspired by the reflection on how God's light reassures us not to be afraid, even in what feels like the darkest situations.

* At dinner time

- Can you think of someone who might need some extra light in their life? How can we help them?
- This question connects with the sermon's encouragement to share light through acts of care and love with others, especially those who feel alone.

* Before bedtime

- Why do you think Jesus was born as a baby in Bethlehem instead of coming to earth as a king?
- This question relates to the pastor's message about Jesus' humble beginnings and the importance of sensitivity and humility.



- * On the way to the beach
 - * Have you seen anything extraordinary in nature that reminds you of God's light?
 - * This connects to the sermon's mention of the Southern Lights and how natural phenomena can remind us of God's glory.
- * While walking in the park
 - * How can we practice bringing light into dark places as Jesus did?
 - * This question refers to the sermon's theme of being Christ's light bearers in a world that commonly settles for darkness.

Good King Wenceslas

The King Who Walked into the Snow

Long ago, in a cold land of forests and frost, there resided a young ruler named Wenceslas. History calls him a duke, but memory calls him Good King Wenceslas—not because he wore fine robes, but because he listened closely to the voice of Christ.

On the Feast of Stephen, the day after Christmas, Wenceslas looked out across the frozen countryside. Snow lay deep. People experiencing poverty were colder still. Instead of feasting longer at his table, he asked a simple question: "Where might someone be hungry today?"

With a servant beside him, he ventured into the night. The snow was cruel, the wind biting cold. The servant faltered—but Wenceslas pressed on, and wherever the king stepped, warmth followed. Not magic exactly. Something better: love put into motion.

That is why we still sing his story. Not because it is sentimental, but because it is demanding. Wenceslas understood something many rulers forget: Christmas is not proved by what we celebrate, but by whom we notice next.

The Day After Christmas — Blood on the Snow

Now here is the twist most people miss.

Wenceslas deliberately chose the Feast of Stephen.

Stephen—Stephen—was not a king. He was a servant of the poor, a teller of hard truths, and the first Christian to be killed for following Jesus. His feast comes on 26 December, right after angels and carols, right after "peace on earth."

And Stephen reminds us: the world does not always welcome the Light.

While Christmas tells us God has come among us, Stephen tells us what that can cost.

Stephen's story ends with stones. Wenceslas' story begins with snow. Both speak the same gospel:

Love does not retreat when conditions are harsh.
 Faith does not wait for comfort.
 Christ is followed not only in worship, but in risk.

Why the Church Keeps These Stories Together

The Church, in her wisdom, places Stephen right after Christmas to stop us from romanticising the Incarnation.

- * Christmas Day says: God is with us.
- * St Stephen's Day says: Will you stay with God when it's costly?

Good King Wenceslas is remembered not because he was powerful, but because he lived as if Christmas had consequences.

He walked into the cold.
 He fed people experiencing poverty.
 He honoured the martyr.
 He followed the Light—no matter the weather.

And So the Story Turns to Us

Every year, the song quietly asks us a question:

Who will you walk toward this Christmas?
 Whose hunger will interrupt your comfort?
 Where might Christ be waiting—just beyond the warm doorway?

Because the truth is this:

The Light of Christmas does not stay safely indoors.
 It steps into the snow.
 It stands beside the forgotten.
 It follows Stephen's courage and Wenceslas' compassion—
 and invites us to do the same.

And somewhere, quietly, footprints begin to appear.

End notes and further reading

End notes and further reading

Nothing to suggest between here and Sunday, but the Test Cricket is on, the Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race is on, pre-Open Tennis begins to hit the road again, and rest is prescribed for everyone!

If you must read, make sure you do obey the road signs!



Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on
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everywhere.

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