

**FIRST LESSON:** Isaiah 52:7-10, *Heralds announce God's salvation*

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." <sup>8</sup>The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup>Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

**SECOND LESSON:** Hebrews 1:1-12, *God has spoken by a son*

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>5</sup>For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? <sup>6</sup>And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." <sup>7</sup>Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." <sup>8</sup>But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup>You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." <sup>10</sup>And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; <sup>11</sup>they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, <sup>12</sup>like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

**GOSPEL:** John 1:1-18, *The word became flesh*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

<sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup>(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup>And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

## **Christmas: Light of Joy and Jesus**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ  
Merry Christmas!

- Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting light.
- Son of God, Love's pure light.
- The highest, most holy, Light of light eternal.
- "Light and life to all he brings...risen with healing in his wings!"
- Radiance beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace
- Jesus Lord at thy birth... Jesus Lord at thy birth!

This is not just a mash up of lines from some favorite Christmas hymns. If I asked you mention things people associate with Christmas someone is bound to mention something to do with light. Christmas lights, Candles, the star of Bethlehem. There are all kinds of light sources that brighten this season. Yet you might notice that in the hymn lines I just mentioned, the Light they describe is not coming from what would most consider a standard light source... It's not even coming from the miraculous star of Bethlehem...

- This is a holy light
- This is an eternal light
- This is a gracious light
- This is the light of Jesus!

Now I think most of us would agree that once they are cleaned up babies do sort light up a room... or in this case a stable. **New life is a thing of Joy.** However, this is more than that refreshing baby glow...because the new life being born that day in the town of Bethlehem was not limited to the Christ Child in the manger.... This tiny child came to bring light and life to us all. This alone would make this child that we celebrate today, special... For centuries people had been waiting for such a savior... someone to bring them out of the darkness... and Jesus had certainly come to do that.

Yet what it seems few if any fully understood in the time leading up to this saviors birth, was that this child wrapped in swaddling cloths and cooing up at his mother, was to be God in the come in the flesh... This Jesus whose very name means, “Savior....”

<sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Yet it a sheer act of unlimited love and grace, this only begotten Son of God, whom the Father

- appointed the heir of all things, & through whom also he created the world.
- <sup>9</sup>This true light, which enlightens everyone, came into the world.
- Humbling himself he became one of us that he might save all of us!

Imagine being in a room with baby who is older, wiser, and more powerful than anyone in the room...including you.

- Imagine being the one chosen to bear such a child within you...
- Imagine being the father chosen to care and provide for such a child?
- Imagine being a blue color worker covered in the stench of something like sheep
  - chosen by God to meet such child in such and awkward place and way...
  - marching into a baryard maternity ward ...
  - and then being moved to go out and tell the world about it!

- Imagine some time later, being a gentleman and scholar, studying in your ivory tower or mansion....
  - When a star motivates you
    - to travel at a most inconvenient time... (no few days travel)
    - to a most inconvenient place (no safe or easy path)...
    - so that you might bring this child gifts... which might end up being used to transport this child to another place for a time in order to save Him from those who would do Him harm.
- Imagine being any of those who had the blessing of witnessing and receiving the light of the Lord. The joy of embracing and receiving Him!....
- Or sadly imagine being one of those on whom the light shined but instead of joy they they chose to embrace the darkness... choosing to try to ignore, silence, or kill this child.

This last seems perhaps the most wildly impossible... yet from the time of Adam and eve until now we are told... This light, this word, this Son of God...

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

<sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Talk about Joy. Talk about hope. Talk about light.... For all who peer into the manger this Christmas Day... to all who receive the Lord and the message of His birth. On all who the light of the Christ and His Word have shined and they have not chosen to turn back toward the darkness... God!... not us but God, Himself has made us His children... Talk about a miraculous birth! The Son of God became man so we might be reborn as children of God.

Of course things would not always seem so bright. We can't talk about Jesus saving light without mentioning the darkness of Gethsemane.... And the darkness that fell over the earth while our Lord suffered on a cross. We can't talk about rebirth without talking about our Lord's death. But despite the repeated attempts by the devil and yes mankind to silence the light of the Savior... This part of the story also involve the joy of new life! For one again <sup>5</sup>The light shined in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Our Lord rose from the grave, bringing the light of life into even our darkest shadows.

Now that is what I call a joyous life changing light! Because of Christ's earthly life death and resurrection, that began with womb and rose from the tomb... We now have a most wonderful, mysterious, and grace filled relationship with our Lord.

- Each of us has now been chosen to bear bear the Lord of light within us... not quite the same as Mary, but as a redeemed child of God.
- Like Joseph we have been chosen to care and provide for our Lord...even as Christ cares and provides for us... as we care and provide for the least of these around and among us.
- Like the Shepherds... each of us comes with some sort of stench or baggage... Yet God has taken care of all that... and yes can even use that... as he calls to us and leads us...
  - To meet and share Him often in the unexpected places...
  - Carrying his light into sometimes strange, unfamiliar, even awkward places
  - As we tell the world about Him!
- No matter how smart, wealthy, or otherwise gifted, we are.... God's light has revealed to us that these things come not from ourselves, but from God.... And so we lay our gifts before Jesus... we lay our gifts before the Christ child... we set aside all that we have for

his purpose... not matter how inconvenient the time or place... so that we might serve and glorify Him.

This is all a part of what it means to be one of those who has the blessing of continually witnessing and receiving the light of the Lord. The joy of embracing and receiving Him!....

As children of the light we reflect the light! We glorify the light. We give thanks to the light.

For He is the light and joy of our salvation! Sure there are all kinds of things that may brighten this or other seasons.... But none compares to this:

- holy
- eternal
- gracious

Light come to us in in our Lord and savior.

So come let us adore Him!

Come let us worship Him!

And may the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen