

The Rev. Kristin Krantz  
St. James', Mt. Airy  
12/24/2015

Christmas (C) Eve – 8:30 pm  
Isaiah 9:2-7  
Psalm 96  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-20

**Gracious God, take our minds and think through them;  
take our hands and work through them;  
take our hearts and set them on fire.  
Amen.**

Once there was someone who did such amazing things and told such wonderful stories, that people wanted to know who he was.

One time he said, "I am the Light." (light the candle)

That person was Jesus, and this is why when we come together to pray and to tell our stories we light candles – to remind us that the Light came into the world and lived among us.

On this night we light many candles, because this is a night like no other. On this night we tell our favorite story as we come close to the Mystery of Christmas.

We celebrate the mystery that is the in-breaking of *God-with-us* – the Incarnation – the birth of Jesus Christ.

And it begins with light.

*The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness--  
one them light has shined.  
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.  
His authority shall grow continually,  
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.*

These words from Isaiah are a promise. They tell us something essential about the God we trust – that we will not be left alone in the shadows of our lives.

God **has** come / **is** coming / **will always** come to be with us.

And so it is that we travel again the familiar road to Bethlehem.

We know by heart that when the time came for Mary to deliver her child, he was wrapped in bands of cloth and laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Our hearts stir with expectation as the glory of the Lord shined around the shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Our hope is found in the words of the multitude of the heavenly host who praised God saying -

*Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!*

It bids us into action -- running alongside the shepherds in search of **love made flesh**. To Bethlehem and beyond!

For this is not news to keep to ourselves. What happens in Bethlehem doesn't stay in Bethlehem.<sup>1</sup>

A love this big, this wide, this deep, this unconditional, must be shared for it has the power to shine light into the shadows of our lives, and the world, bringing peace and justice.

Love is made incarnate when we open our hearts and hands to the world: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the broken, finding the lost, making peace.

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English poet Christina Rossetti is most famous for writing the words to the Christmas carol *In the bleak midwinter*, but it is another of her carols that is my favorite.

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, this is from the Facebook feed for Unvirtuous Abbey.

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love Divine,  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,  
Worship we our Jesus,  
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
Love shall be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and all men,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Light and love are the gifts God gave once for all on that birth night all those years ago. And this why we come this night to hear our story. The story of a love so profound that it was born human to live among us.

And we come to hear again our part in the story. How it is that this work of Incarnation didn't stop with Mary, but is our labor also.

We are Christ's hands and heart in this world. Like Mary when she offered herself up to magnify the Lord, our lives are meant to magnify the light of God. Tonight we refill our stock of oil and set our hearts on fire, that we may go forth bearing the light of Christ this night, and tomorrow, and in the days and weeks and months to come.

For we are people of light. We are recipients of the light that shone in the darkness, the light of the wild star which pierced through the sky and pointed to the manger, the light born in Bethlehem.

It begins with light...

Watch the light. (*blow out the candle*)

Do you see it? The light is no longer in one place. Now it is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner as it fills the room. Anywhere you are, anywhere you go, you are close to it – **you are a bearer of it.**

This is the Mystery of Christmas

Alleluia ~ Amen