



## CASCADIAN WEEKLY

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Cascade Christian Church,

You did it! You made it through the Christmas Storm of 2022. This has been a most unusual weekend, and we had to do the rare thing of cancelling the Christmas Eve services. I am so grateful to those who helped us get through the weekend, to Liisa Erskine for putting together the online Christmas Eve service which we worked on with our phones and home computers, to Michael Dirksen for reading scripture, and to those who came and cleared the drifts of snow – Scott, Jacob, and Joe Robertson, Jeff VanStrien, Jim Early, Mike Forton, and most likely others of which I am not aware. And to all who have been working this last month with music, solos, dramas, scripture readings, choir songs, and elder meditations, thank you for preparing for the birth of Jesus, and we hope to use some of your efforts this coming Sunday or Christmas Eve 2023. I also want to thank those who joined us for worship Christmas Day – it was glorious! Storm or no storm – Jesus is born, hallelujah!

My Christmas Day message focused on Psalm 85, a Psalm not unlike the ghosts of Charles Dicken’s “A Christmas Carol”. It is a psalm that looks back at the past, deals with the present, and looks to the future.

<sup>1</sup> You, LORD, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. <sup>2</sup> You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. <sup>3</sup> You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger. <sup>4</sup> Restore us again, God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. <sup>5</sup> Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? <sup>6</sup> Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? <sup>7</sup> Show us your unfailing love, LORD, and grant us your salvation. <sup>8</sup> I will listen to what God the LORD says, he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—but let them not turn to folly. <sup>9</sup> Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. <sup>10</sup> Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. <sup>11</sup> Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. <sup>12</sup> The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. <sup>13</sup> Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

The people at that time were dealing with hardship, with the aftermath of captivity and displacement, with pain and darkness. They looked at their present, and asked God for restoration and revival. Then, they get the answer, and it is our answer, the answer to our Christmas longings in verses 10-13. Righteousness and peace kiss – God will make all things right; all we need to do is follow the Prince of Peace. Everything is in God’s hands – so we respond in love and faithfulness. Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness goes before us and prepares our way.

As we close out 2022 and look ahead to 2023, may you be blessed as peace and righteousness embrace you. May the love of God enfold you; all is well and Christ is born.

Keep the faith,

Jill

# WEEKLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<b>SUNDAY   1/1</b>	Combined Worship Service   10:30am (Sanctuary) Alcoholics Anonymous   7:00 pm
<b>MONDAY   1/2</b>	Church Office Closed Alcoholics Anonymous   8:00pm
<b>TUESDAY   1/3</b>	Senior Exercise Class   1:00pm
<b>WEDNESDAY   1/4</b>	Men's Bible Study   6:30am (Coffee House) Wednesday Night Classes   6:30pm Boy Scouts   7:00pm Alcoholics Anonymous   8:00pm
<b>THURSDAY   1/5</b>	Grief Share   10:00am (Coffee House) Gospel of John Study   10:30am (Rm. 112) Senior Exercise Class   1:00pm Cub Scouts   6:00pm Al-Anon   8:00pm
<b>FRIDAY   1/6</b>	Church Office Closed Open Talk Group   7:30am (Coffee House)

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

### ATTENDANCE:

In-Person: 39

Website: 40 Households

Facebook: 22 Views

### CHRISTMAS EVE:

Website: 65 Households

Facebook: 78 Views

### FINANCIAL GIVING for the week ending

on 12/25/2022:

Budgeted: \$10,652

Given: \$3,572.30

## GENERAL NEWS

### COMBINED WORSHIP SERVICE THIS WEEK

We will be having one single worship service at 10:30am on Sunday, January 1 in the Sanctuary. Join us as we begin the new year together in worship.

### OFFICE CLOSED JANUARY 2

The church office will be closed in observance of New Years Day on Monday, January 2. We will resume our normal office hours Tuesday, January 3.

### JONATHAN GAYLORD COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

We will have a special service to honor our college students on Sunday, January 8 during the 9:30 service. The Jonathan Gaylord College Scholarship checks will be presented to the recipients at that time. We are grateful to the Kingsland family for funding these scholarships through the Christian Church Foundation.

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT ADULT BIBLE STUDY

The Wednesday Night Bible study class will resume again on Wednesday, January 4 with a new study on the book of Romans. We will be using a Max Lucado video and guide for a six session study. The book of Romans teaches us that even in our weakness, God will never let us go. Sessions will include:

- **January 4:** The Problem We Face – Romans 1-2
- **January 11:** The Gift We've Been Offered – Romans 3-5
- **January 18:** The Battle We Fight – Romans 6-8
- **January 25:** The Story We've Joined – Romans 9-11
- **February 1:** The Path We Follow – Romans 12-13
- **February 8:** The Fellowship We Find – Romans 14-16

# CHRISTMAS SERMON: BE BORN IN US TODAY | BRINGING LIGHT

Many Christmas Eves I have closed the service with the following Celtic blessing, and it seems a good place to start as we worship during the Christmas Storm of 2022:



*The darkest midnight in December, no snow nor hail, nor winter storm,  
Shall hinder for us to remember, the Babe on this night was born.  
With shepherds we come to see this lovely infant's glorious charms,  
Born of a maid, as the prophet said, the God of Love in Mary's arms  
Ye blessed angels join our voices, let your gilded wings burst into flight  
While every soul set free rejoices, the God of Light is born this night.*

It is so good to be with you on this holy night. This is the night of nights, the time we remember when the whole world changed, when the prophecies of old were fulfilled and the path of the future was illuminated. This is the night, a night of celebration, and a night of reverence, of quiet, of holiness, a baby is born, and He is Christ the Lord.\

We worship God in praise that His Son comes to us, stays with us, guides us, blesses us, empowers us. And tonight, this holy night, we come in deep need, we need the light of God, we need a touch of the divine, we need someone to believe in, and we look, we seek, we find, that all of the answers are found in the Child of Bethlehem, who is born in us tonight, and that Jesus is the Light.

**The world can be such a dark place.** As I have met with many of you this month you've shared how dark it is. The last two and a half years have been tiresome, exhausting, challenging. You've been so brave; you've gotten through circumstances we could not have imagined three years ago. And yet, as followers of Christ we know God is with us in the darkness. God's light shines through as it has from the beginning – Genesis 1:3-4 reminds us: **God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. God saw that the light was good. He separated the light from the darkness.** The light of God is God's first act of creation, and that light shines through the birth of Jesus, through the ages, right up to this night. If you're at a time where all is light and good in your life, bask in the light of the manger, celebrate and worship with joy and thanksgiving. If you're feeling overcome by the darkness, by worry, grief, division, stress, God knows, and God's light is there for you, and will light your way and lighten your burden, if you just turn to the light.

There is a painting of the first Christmas that has caught my attention this week. It is titled "Nativity with St. Francis and St. Lawrence" by Caravaggio. Aside from the clothing and the fact that Saints Francis and Lawrence were not present at the nativity – the painting is worth looking at. What has captured my eye is the darkness in the painting, the realism of Mary and her infant son. The realism is stark - Mary is pictured as a young woman, exhausted, disheveled, slouching in fatigue, a woman who just made a very difficult journey, and then gave birth in a barn. The realism of the Baby, of Jesus, clutches at my heart. God's Son is a naked, small baby, laying at Mary's feet, on the floor, on some straw.

The painting is so dark. Darkness permeates the scene, and reminds me of how very dark that first Christmas was. The scripture accounts of the birth of Jesus make it clear - the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks at night. And into that great darkness came an angel of the Lord, and the glory of the Lord SHONE around the shepherds. Against the blackness of the night sky and the darkness of the Judean hills came the message of light: **For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

## CHRISTMAS SERMON CONTINUED

Dark and light, light and dark. If you look up Caravaggio's painting, the darkness of that night in Bethlehem is all over his picture of the nativity. You can scarcely see an animal, is it a cow, a donkey? The figures are so dark, the background is black, but the artist uses light in the darkness to illuminate Mary, the robe of the angel, the faces of the saints and shepherds, and light on the face of Jesus.

The prophecy in Isaiah 9:2 witnesses to light and dark: **The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.** Light permeates the darkness, penetrates the darkness. There is an echo of this prophecy in John 1:5 – **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.** That is the story of the first Christmas night, and that is our story. We live in a time where there is so much light, but most of the history of humankind didn't have electricity, screens, devices that give us light at the press of a button, at the flip of a switch. Light is so abundant that it is easy to forget that this is the darkest time of the year. The solstice, the shortest day of the year was on Wednesday. The days are short, the sun rises late and sets early. But still, this is advent, the season of light, and the darkness might give us a moment to slow down, to keep watch for how God is active all around us – celebrated this night in sweets, gifts, colorful lights, songs, and decorations. The darkness reminds us in the festivities – that this is the night we celebrate God's greatest gift to us - the Light of Jesus – Jesus, the Light of the World.

In this season of light and dark, here are God's gifts to you:

- If there is someone here whose darkness has overcome them, who are haunted and pursued by guilt and regret, then for you there is forgiveness in the One who took your sin's punishment in your place. For you, the light of Christ has come.
- If there is someone whose darkness is isolation and loneliness someone who can be in a room full of people and still feel alone, someone whose family could come home for Christmas, then for you this night there is the living presence of the One who knew forsakenness, who knew loneliness, who went for you to the isolation of the cross. For you, the light of Christ has come.
- If there is someone here whose darkness is conflict, someone whose been at odds with another person for too long and is tired of the battle, then for you tonight there can be peace and reconciliation. For you, the light of Christ has come.
- If your darkness is despair, if anxiety and depression are heavy for you- if it feels like there is darkness everywhere – then this night there is hope for you in the one who said, "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) For you the light of Christ has come.
- If there is someone this Christmas Eve that can't find their way into the dark, someone who feels lost, like a sheep without a shepherd, lost in the night, then for you there is a light to guide you, if you trust the Creator and Bringer of light. For you, the light of Christ has come.
- And if there is someone here who is grieving, someone who has lost the light of living, there is still light to live by, there is purpose for your days, and there is a promise that you will see those you love again. For you, too, the light and love of Christ has come.

The news that came to the shepherds in the darkness of night is the good news to you - **And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."** Luke 2: 10-12 Have you ever wondered if some of the shepherds held back? That they didn't follow the angels instructions, that they stayed with the sheep, went back to sleep, were too scared to go, or that they didn't believe what they'd just seen and heard?

## CHRISTMAS SERMON CONTINUED

I hope they all went, but sometimes it is easier to stay in the dark, to nurse our wounds, to cling to our brokenness, to find excuses to not go, or to simply roll over and go back to sleep.

Friends, if you're paying attention to God, you have to respond. This is the night of Good News! You've heard the story before – you know the story of Christmas, but do you claim it? Do you receive the gift? This is good news of great joy that is for all the people – that means you, the people you love, the people you can't stand, and everyone everywhere. This is the news that changes history – including your history. John 1:4-5 describes Jesus like this: **Life was in him, and that life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not overcome the light.** Yes, it is dark out there, but the light shines through, Jesus always shines through. Jesus himself reassures us saying in John 12:46 **I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.**

Friends, it is not too late. Christmas is almost here; you've done so much to prepare and undoubtedly you didn't get to do all you had planned. There are things left undone. And there always will be. You don't have to do it all - you can't. But in the matters of soul, mind, and heart, Jesus has you – completely, and He has given His all so you can have all that counts, you have all that matters. There is no need to stay in the darkness. It is not too late. It is just the right time, and you're in the right place. Jesus is coming, whether we feel ready or not. Jesus is coming, no matter how satisfied or dissatisfied we feel in our preparations. He comes to us, no matter what. He's coming so we can be at peace with where we are, with what we've done, and most importantly, with who we are. Be satisfied, be at peace, and come into the light, because He is here, and He welcomes you.

As you celebrate Christmas, Jesus comes to you in light. Look for him in the light of a Christmas tree, look for him in the light of a candle that shines in the darkness, look for him in the light of the eyes of a loved one. Light and hope shines in the eyes of a little baby, a child born for us, to us, the light of Jesus shines in the manger, born in us tonight, bringing light. Look into the light in the face of Jesus, you're looking at your future. Put that in your heart, treasure this, as Mary did. And then look up, angels are singing, the sky is filled with light, the sheep can wait, the preparations can go on hold. Something is happening – there is a new star over Bethlehem, there's a bright light in a stable. Let's go and see. Amen and amen.