

Title: The Light and Life of Christmas
Date: December 31, 2023
Subject: Christ as the provider of hope, peace, joy, love, light and life.
Scripture: Selected

Many Christmas and other Christian songs link Christ's first advent to earth as the baby in a manger with his death on the cross and his second advent as coming King. It's no surprise songwriters do that because that's what the Bible does. Prophecies foretelling Christ's first coming merge into his life, death, and second coming.

This morning we'll celebrate Communion through focusing on the themes of advent, directly tying them to Christ's sacrifice. We'll essentially let God speak for himself through his words in the Bible. The governing board is going to read Scripture woven together around hope, peace, joy, and love. The verses will include prophecies about Christ, fulfilment of the prophecies, how the aspects are available to us because of Christ and future fulfillment. Each man will then pray about that specific area.

We begin with hope and peace.

HOPE Cliff

"The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope" (Romans 15:12). Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ...without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:12, 13). God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God...And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:2, 5). If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:19). Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3, 4). We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently (Romans 8:23 – 25). Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23). Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming (1 Peter 1:13). Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like

him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2, 3). Christ Jesus our hope (1 Timothy 1:1).

PEACE David

Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace (Luke 1:78, 79). For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...And he will be called...Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end (Isaiah 9:6, 7). Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:13, 14). For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation (Colossians 1:19 – 22). The punishment that brought us peace was on him (Isaiah 53:5). For he himself, Christ Jesus, is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Jesus again said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts (Colossians 3:15). The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet (Romans 16:20).

Communion – the bread

JOY Jim

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest (Isaiah 9:3). The angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (Luke 2:10, 11). Jesus said, "I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). Rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20). Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:8, 9). And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the

pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:1 – 3). You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Psalm 16:11). Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4). Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:6, 7). Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things...Come and share your master’s happiness! (Matthew 25:21).

LOVE Reuel

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever (1 Chronicles 16:34). “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you (Isaiah 54:10). You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love (Nehemiah 9:17). This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us (1 John 3:16). Love comes from God...This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins... And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love (1 John 4:7, 9, 10, 16). Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4, 5). See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! (1 John 3:1). In love God the Father predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us (Ephesians 1:4 – 8). For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Communion – the cup

LIGHT & LIFE

Sometimes Advent celebrations have a fifth candle - the Christ candle which is lit on Christmas day. It represents light and purity. Numerous Old Testament prophecies speak about the Christ in terms of light (Isaiah 9:2; 10:17; 42:6; 49:6; 60:1-3, 19; Numbers 24:17; Malachi 4:2). The one that's most quoted says “The people

walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:2). Jesus quoted this passage at the beginning of his ministry (Matthew 4:16). Later Jesus said that he is the light of the world (John 8:12). This is to be understood as him being the light to the world, for the world, of the world.

“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The prophecies about Christ extend into the second advent. “The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory” (Isaiah 60:19). Sounds a lot like the book of Revelation: “The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (Revelation 21:23).

Henry M. Morris is regarded by many to be the father of modern creation science. He worked and taught in several engineering fields having received an engineering PhD. He knew a thing or two about the scientific world. On commenting about the statement in the Bible “God is light, in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5), he writes: “Light is the most fundamental and important form of energy, and energy includes every phenomenon in the physical universe. It is appropriate for John to affirm that God is light because everything created must reflect the character of its Creator. The term “light,” therefore, has come to be applied not only to light in the physical sense but also to that which is true in the intellectual realm and holy in the moral realm” (Henry M. Morris, Days of Praise, December 18, 2023).

Jesus also said he is the bread of life and whoever comes to him and believes in him will never go hungry, never be thirsty and will live forever (John 6:35 - 41, 47 -51, 53-58). Scripture declares: “This we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us” (1 John 1:1, 2).

Jesus brings life through his earthly life in which he lived as fully God and fully human, his substitutionary death, and resurrection from the dead to life.

Light and life are inextricably bound together in Jesus Christ since he is light and he is life. The Bible declares: “In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (John 1:4). He is the light-giver and the life-giver as we hear in the carol Hark the Herald Angels Sing: “Light and life to all he brings.”

Like the wisemen who saw the star of the King, we have seen his light and were drawn to him. We saw what he did and understood it was for us, for you, for me. We saw him as the one who brought forgiveness of sins and enabled us to get into a right relationship with God.

We saw him as the one who brought eternal life and offered that gift to us. We have received life from him. This is what we celebrated in communion. He gives hope. He gives peace. He gives joy. He gives love. He gives light. He gives life.

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13). May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way (2 Thessalonians 3:16). To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! (Jude 24, 25). To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance (Jude 1, 2).