

## Christmas Eve - Pericope Study for Sunday, December 24, 2017

Presented Tuesday, December 19, 2017 by Richard Burgess

### Collect / POD (ELW)

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### General Thoughts & Questions for the Week

What are we celebrating / worshiping / observing / fighting / humoring . . . on / at / with Christmas?

How does / has the secular world co-opted Christmas? In what ways do we need to resist / reclaim / leverage / repurpose / ignore it?

Is Christmas about incarnation? Darkness and light? Salvation? Eschatological reversal? Shepherds, donkeys, & magi? Santa & Rudolph?

How does Lutheran theology of the cross fit in with Christmas? How does one preach it?

These passages have many names for Jesus or the Messiah. What do they mean for you? What can you do with them?

### Possible Sermon Titles for Christmas Eve

As usual, use at your own risk.

	Is	Titus	Lk
Darkness into Light	X		
Dividing Plunder	X		
Shined Upon	X		
Walking in Darkness; Seeing Great Light	X		
Bringing Salvation to All		X	
For Christ or By Christ?		X	
Jesus Is Your Trainer		X	
Redeemed and Purified		X	
Waiting in Hope for Glory		X	
Zealous for Good Deeds		X	
As It Had Been Told Them			X
Emperors Decree; Saviors Are Born			X
Let Us See This Thing the Lord Has Shown Us			X
Peace – To Those Whom He Favors			X
Treasure and Ponder			X
Treasure These Words and Ponder Them in Your Heart			X
A Son Is Born	X		X
Baby Jesus	X		X

**Isaiah 9:2-7** (NRSV)

<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep  
darkness—  
on them light has shined.  
<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.  
<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of  
Midian.  
<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.  
<sup>6</sup>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.  
<sup>7</sup>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.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Notes, Observations, & Thought  
Questions:**

9.2 What is it like to be in darkness and see light? Is this the same as having light shone on you?

9.2 What was this “great light” for Isaiah & his people?

9.4 *the day of Midian* See Judges 7, a rather spectacular military victory with hobbled, yet victorious, Israelite forces powered by YHWH.

9.6 What are the Messianic expectations here? Did Isaiah have Jesus in mind? Can we have Jesus in mind, granted that it’s Christmas and we have to?

9.7 *from this time onward and forevermore* Is this the same as “eternal”? How does “forevermore” relate to people’s lives? Does this a present or a future oriented thing?

**Names for Jesus / Messiah:**

- 9.6 a child
- 9.6 a son
- 9.6 Wonderful Counselor
- 9.6 Mighty God,
- 9.6 Everlasting Father
- 9.6 Prince of Peace
- 9.7 Throne of David
- 9.7 Zeal of the Lord of Hosts  
(too much of a stretch?)

**Titus 2:11-14:** (NRSV)

<sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

**Notes, Observations, & Thought Questions:**

2.11 Jesus = *grace of God*? How so?

This passage seems to require some work on our part.

2.11 renounce impiety, worldly passions

2.11 be self-controlled, upright, & godly

2.14 be zealous for (= do?) good deeds

Is this compatible with the Lutheran dogma of justification by grace alone?

2.11–13 “Two appearances or manifestations of Jesus mark God’s plan of salvation: the incarnation is a manifestation of God’s *grace* (see also 3.4; 1 Tim 3.16; 2 Tim 1.10) and the *parousia*, or Second Coming, is a manifestation of God’s *glory* (see also 1 Tim 6.14).” (Harper Collins Study Bible)

2.14 The goal seems here to purify us from iniquity so we might be acceptable to Christ for his benefit / comfort / honor. What would it mean to be saved not to obtain our own eternal life, but rather to satisfy some desire or need of God / Christ? How does that feel? Similarly, does *people . . . who are zealous for good deeds* feel at all like being used?

**Names for Jesus / Messiah:**

2.11 Grace of God

2.11 Savior (implied)

2.12 Trainer (implied)

2.13 Our Great God

2.13 Savior

2.13 Jesus Christ

2.14 Redeemer

2.14 Purifier

**Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]: (NRSV)**

<sup>2.1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those  
whom he favors!”

[<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

<sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and

pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

**Notes, Observations, & Thought Questions:**

Are you going to do the short or the long version of this story?

Put yourself in the place of one or more of the characters in the Christmas story. What is your experience? What is your awareness of God?

- 2.1 Emperor Augustus
- 2.2 Quirinius, governor of Syria
- 2.3 People travelling to register
- 2.4 Joseph
- 2.5 Mary
- 2.7 Jesus
- 2.7 Inn keeper / host without room
- 2.8 Shepherds
- 2.9 Angel of the Lord
- 2.13 Multitude of Angels

Note the allocation of verses in form criticism structure for a miracle story:

- Setup / problem 2.1-5
- Miracle / Birth per se 2.6-7
- Reaction of witnesses 2.8-20

Compared to the usual miracle story, this is a lot of attention to the “and all were astonished” part. Significance? Relevance to the attention we usually devote to the Christmas Story?

2.19 *Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart* What are *these words*? What would it mean for us to treasure and ponder them in our hearts?

**Names for Jesus / Messiah:**

- 2.7 Firstborn Son
- 2.11 Savior
- 2.11 Messiah
- 2.11 The Lord
- 2.15 This Thing that has Taken Place