

SERMON NOTES:

The Light Shines In The Darkness

Christmas Appeal for
Baptist World Aid Australia

You may wish to use these sermon notes for your Christmas sermon or otherwise in your ministry during the season.

The Light of the World born into a dark, messy world.

- While we often skim over the familiarity of the nativity story, it's important to slow down in Luke 2:1-6 and look at the historical context. Mary and Joseph are ordered to report for the census. Their journey to Bethlehem is long, dangerous and exhausting. They travel away from their usual support systems to obey both the governor of Syria and the angel who had appeared to each.
- Luke 2:7 says that Mary gave birth to 'her firstborn son and was born in a manger', a feeding trough for animals. The greatest miracle in the history of the world, the eternal Son of God being born as a human, defies the expectations of Jewish thinking and makes his entrance quietly in a stable in an obscure village.
- The night sky bursts into light before shepherds in Luke 2:8-14, as angels bring the glory of the Lord, not to a temple, but into a field. A group of unlikely messengers, shepherds, are given a message of hope and peace that they could never have imagined.
- The shepherds then leave their flock to find the Christ child just as the angels had told them (Luke 2:15-18).

'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



The Light of the Christ Child, the Son of the Living God

This entrance into poverty, danger and obscurity seems an unlikely strategy for the God of the Universe to announce his Son's coming, the Light of the World. And yet, this event in history prepares the way for the Messiah's ministry to those on the margins, those least likely to be 'religious influencers', those who live below societal norms of class and success.

- 1 Corinthians 1:27: 'But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.'
- James 2:5: 'Listen, my beloved brothers: Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love Him?'

'The good news is for those who are poor, spiritually poor and physically poor.' —Rev. Tim Costello

The Light for Today

God's willingness to enter the world as a baby in a time of great poverty, brokenness and displacement reflects the same God who today lights up the world through work around the world. It is a light that shines further than our own country and casts out the darkness of the world's poorest countries. It is the light of hope that we find today still in Jesus, born a baby, loving the vulnerable in his ministry, dying a criminal's death and rising again from the grave to bring eternal life.

- John 1:5 says, 'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.' We know that to be true in our daily lives as followers of Jesus and in our church families. Light a match in a dark room or flip a light switch in the church hall at night, and we see the darkness disperse. Light floods the room in the same way Christ's light and hope fills our hearts and changes our lives.
- In the same way, thankfully, we know the light of God's provision changes the lives of children in Bangladesh, Nepal and Uganda, just as the sun and rain brings health to crops in Cambodia and Kenya. Through the work of Christian Partners with Baptist World Aid, the Light of Life brings practical hope and help to vulnerable families on the brink of poverty in 18 countries.

'Christmas is God lighting a candle; and you don't light a candle in a room that's already full of sunlight. You light a candle in a room that's so murky that the candle, when lit, reveals just how bad things really are.' — N.T. Wright, 'For All God's Worth'



The Light of Jesus in his People

- When we experience the light of Christ pushing away the darkness, even as he did in that manger as a babe, and then conquering the darkness of death after he was crucified, we can't help but respond. No wonder Jesus said to his followers (in Matthew 5:14-16), 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'**
- When Christ's light melts our hearts, it overflows in us as the light of hope to and for others. It moves us to go beyond the culture's expectations of Christmas so that we can reflect 'Christ in you the hope of glory' (Colossians 1:27).
- This Christmas, we have the opportunity to reflect Christ's light of hope in our giving, impacting the world's poor through the work of Baptist World Aid. Especially as our world experiences the darkness that a global famine brings, we can give so that others can eat.

'A total 309 million people face acute hunger in 71 countries in 2024—almost 200 million above pre-COVID-19 levels. Of these, more than 37.2 million people face emergency levels of hunger or worse.'

—[World Food Programme](#)

- We have the opportunity together to enlarge a nation and increase the joy of our neighbours around the world. As Isaiah says in 9:2-3, '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, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.'
- That we can do this at all is because 'to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . and of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.' His life and hope gives us the privilege to be citizens of his kingdom in the here and now, because 'he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the son he loves' (Colossians 1:13).
- And so we give. 'Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, **so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.**'—1 Timothy 6:17-19