



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 24, 2023
Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
Reading: [Luke 2:1-7](#)
Reading: [Luke 2:8-20](#)
Sermon Text: [Isaiah 9:2, 6-7](#)

Pastor James Enderle

The Promised and Enduring Light

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Probably depending on where you live right now, during the last few days, how much sun have you seen? If you live a little bit more towards the city (down on the bottom of the hill), maybe you've seen a little bit more sun, but if you're up here in the fog? It's kind of been foggy now for 2-3 days. Even though there is night and day, we really haven't seen the sun. It's kind of becoming this foreign thing. "What is that sun?" On top of that, it's in the middle of winter where, how much sun do we even get? What time does the sun come up? It's probably much later than we want. When does it get dark? It seems like it is 4:00 p.m. when it is getting dark already. You can tell and feel when you don't get enough sun, when that darkness seems to set in, and it can affect you a lot.

We see that here when we've experienced a little bit lessening of the sun, but imagine places like up north, real up north, not Door County, not northern Wisconsin, but places like Alaska. There are towns in Alaska where the sun doesn't rise for nearly two months. Can you imagine two months of darkness? What would that be like, to wake up and to not expect light to be there? How do you even figure out your night and day when there is no light? Could you imagine that there is no light? That's kind of what we expect. We go to bed. We wake up and it's morning and there is light, even if it's a little overcast or a little gloomy.

But as Isaiah writes, he talks about a people in darkness. The people at his time were in darkness. They were struggling. They were turning away from God. Here "darkness" often can refer to things in two ways. Darkness can be "evil" or "ignorant." The people in darkness, so maybe the people that were doing evil, were turning away from God, and then the people who didn't know God, that didn't know any better but they weren't

trying to figure it out. This is who he is speaking about—people that have kind of strayed or are just in darkness.

Do you ever feel that our world is in darkness, that people are living in ignorance of the truth? That's really what light is when we talk about Jesus coming into the world. He is the Light and the truth. But there is a lot of ignorance. People don't want anything to do with God. But there is also the evil. We see the hatred that people have for one another, on a small scale and then on a large scale. A scale of wars and wars and wars, which we know will never end. There truly is darkness out there.

We have to also be careful. It's so easy to look at just the darkness out there. But we also have to look at the darkness in our own hearts. I often say one of the things that I love about Christianity is that we start out by saying the problem isn't out there, as everyone else in the world does. If you think about politics today, whose fault is it? If "those people could just change," "if they would vote to do things the way that we want them to do," then everything would be great. "Those people just need to fix their way or change their thinking, and then things would be fixed." As Christians, what do we say? No, the darkness actually starts in my own heart because I know I am born sinful. That heart is what we really call an "idol factory"—making up idols and turning away from God constantly. Maybe you might say "I'm not turning away from God," but anytime you put something above God, you are worshipping an idol. If it's money, if it's work, if it's family, if it's sex, whatever it could be, if you are worshipping that, it's above God. It's an idol. Our hearts get darkened by that.

So often, maybe that idol is just oneself. That's the easiest one because we like to serve ourselves. We do it over and over again, when we don't serve our spouses, when children don't serve parents. There is a constant struggle to always want to put ourselves first and say "Me, me, me, and me!" Our hearts are in darkness. So what do we need? We need Light. We need the Light to break through into our hearts and to see there is hope. Like in Alaska, where you've had months of darkness and that light shines through, could you imagine that? Isn't that what God's Word is, what Christmas is really about, this Light shining and donning?

We kind of picture Christmas Eve as the start, that Christ comes to be among us. Propheted way back in Isaiah and often people, scholars, people who like to rip things apart, they say "No way could Isaiah have written this when he did, 700 years before Jesus lived, because he speaks about Jesus so perfectly, so beautifully. How could God do this?" It's only because of God that Isaiah could write these things. And what does he write? ***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...*** That right there, those words may be very simple but, to us—for to us a son is born, to us a child is given. The beauty that it's not just a child being born, but TO US! It's a gift! This is what Christmas is.

Why do we give gifts? We have been given the greatest gift ever! God gave His Son to you and to me. Christ came to be one of us. He gives all these descriptions of what that will be like. We will walk through a few of these names. He says that **...the government will be on his shoulders**. What does that mean? This is so fascinating because it is saying that He has all power and authority to govern, to rule, to protect, to sustain, to control. He is over all things. It says, even in John (which we are going to read tomorrow, [John 1](#)), that He is there in the beginning with God and through Him all things were made. He was God! He had all things and what did He do? He was born! It's a miracle! It's amazing!

So this God, with all power and authority, comes to be a man, to be like you and me. That's also what is kind of described in the next word. He says, **And he will be called Wonderful Counselor...** I think often we talk about a counselor as someone you go to talk to and they give some advice and things. But also a counselor can be someone who counsels you and gives some advice because they have experienced what you have experienced. Jesus has lived among us. He took on flesh, to be tempted in every way that you are, but to live a perfect life. So if you are ever wondering and worrying and say "No one understands what it's like to be me. No one understands the difficulties I'm going through. No one understands," Jesus says, "I do." Think about the worst things that could happen to you. Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest friends, the authorities hated Him and He was unjustly arrested and unjustly murdered. If you say "Life has been unfair," does God care? Jesus understands.

Where we have fallen short, He did not. He was perfect in our place because He is **Mighty God**. He is the God-Man. He had to be man to be under the Law, to be in our place, but then He had to be God, to be perfect so that His blood could pay for the sins of the world, for us, for all of us. What a beautiful thing to know that He knows what it is like to be like you, to experience the things that you have experienced, but then to have been perfect so that the righteousness that we could never earn or gain or get, we know that it is given to us because of what Christ has done.

It says that He is **Everlasting Father**. He has love and has care and compassion. A lot of people want to say "Show me God. Show me who God is and I'll believe you, if you can show me God." We say, "Look to Jesus. That's God." The compassion He had, how He continually went to care for people and He looked after those who others didn't want anything to do with. He ate with those who were called "sinners." He ate with the downcast/outcasts. He is the Good Shepherd who loves and cares for you and for me, like the love of a great father.

But as we see, it says this: **Everlasting Father**. We will see what that means in just a second, but what He gives us because of all the things He has done is peace. He is the **Prince of Peace**. I'd argue with you that I think that is what everyone is looking for in this world. Peace. That true comfort and happiness and joy that is so hard to find

because this world is hard. It's always a challenge. After one thing, then it's another thing, and then another thing, and then another thing, and you might have peace for a second, but it seems fleeting. God says "I will give you that peace," that great word in Hebrew, "Shalom;" a wholeness, a peace, a happiness, a joy, a comfort. But only through Christ can we have that "true peace."

It talks about how this will go on. ***Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*** Maybe you are like me where you are saying "It's Christmas Eve? Tomorrow is Christmas Day? Where did the year go? Where did the holiday go?" It just kind of went "Whoop." I have four kids—a seven-year-old, a little eight-week-old, and some kids in between (a four-year-old and a two-year old). You look back at pictures and look at our seven-year-old when he was about two and you're like "Oh, my goodness! Where did the time go?" That time just seems so fast and fleeting. We try to grasp it, but it's that same picture of that peace where things just keep slipping. You search for that peace. It's there for a short time and then it's gone. Just as this season, where maybe you love Christmas and you wish it was a little bit longer, but it's here and it's gone, and we're on to a new year, another one. Things just seem to move on, and what is the hope? God says that He gives us an everlasting peace and His kingdom is everlasting. It's true hope.

On Christmas, our Savior comes to establish a kingdom that is not of this world but it is in each and every one of us. He comes for you and for me and for all who know Him. He has come for the whole world, but He wants all to know Him and to know that He loves them. He loves them, not just for one day and it's here and gone. It is forever.

So as we grasp and we try to hold onto things that are forever changing, even the greatest things, the good memories, the Christmas cookies and all the great things that you have that are here and then gone, it's nothing like that joy and everlasting peace that God gives.

I want us to hold onto that because there is so much else out there in the world. This darkness it talks about and what tries to say "There is no hope," or "Go after all these other things because there is no meaning, no purpose," and "All this stuff about Jesus, well, it doesn't mean anything." I'd argue that they have no hope and they are just like a bunch of blind men leading the blind. When you enter into a room, if you enter in at night where there is no light, do you ever walk in and then stumble over something as you are trying to get to the light? That's what it is like without Jesus in our life. We need that Light to shine. We need that Light to don and to guide us in our lives, to know that we are loved, that we are forgiven, that we have a true peace and forgiveness, so that we can love and forgive one another and know that Jesus is with us, now and forever. That means so much today, but every day in your relationships; every day as

you cling to Him for your forgiveness and hope and then you can forgive those in your life and cling to what lasts—Christ, who sets up this everlasting kingdom, because it's not about us.

It says ***The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*** This is what Christmas is about. It's not about us. It's not about all the things we prepare and do. It's about what the Lord is doing and has done and what He has done for you. ***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...*** It's a promise and eternal Light, a Light that will shine through all the darkest times in your life and give you a true peace, because you have the ***Prince of Peace*** forever. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.