

Christmas Eve Service

Light in the darkness, a child in a manger, and the Lamb on the throne

SPEAKER	Multiple
DATE	Sunday, December 24, 2022
PASSAGES	Luke 2:1-20; Isaiah 9:2-7; John 8:12; Revelation 5:6-14
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

On Christmas Eve the church told the whole story through readings and carols rather than a sermon: a people walking in darkness who see a great light, a child laid in a manger, and a Lamb standing as if slain, worthy to receive all honour. As surely as Christ came once as a baby, he will come again — and we wait for him with candles lit.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Jesus is the light of the world, and those who follow him will never walk in darkness.
- ◆ Christmas is about waiting coming to an end: as Christ came as a baby in Bethlehem, he will come again in a way we do not expect.
- ◆ Isaiah promised a child who would bear the government on his shoulders, with no end to the increase of his peace.
- ◆ The birth was announced first to shepherds in the fields, who hurried to see and then spread the word.
- ◆ Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart — a model for receiving Christmas.
- ◆ The child of Bethlehem is the Lamb of Revelation, who by his blood purchased people for God from every tribe, tongue and nation.

► 0:00:05

The service opened with a greeting — “the peace of Christ be with you” — and the congregation rose to sing “Joy to the World,” its verses on a Lord who “rules the world with truth and grace” and “the wonders of his love.”

A welcome, and a promise about the candles

► 0:08:28

Senior pastor Matt Ryniker welcomed everyone and announced two changes. First, the service had started early — “for those of you that aren’t here with us most Sunday mornings, that’s just a minor miracle.”

► 0:10:32

Second, he would preach a full-length sermon during the lighting of the candles, “just read a lot from Romans and see when the Spirit falls.” Then he relented: “That’s not actually going to happen.” He knew the parents were nervous about the candle part — “I’m not going to let you down.” He thanked Michael and the worship team, the live-stream crew, and the sound and slides teams, and wished everyone a merry Christmas.

The light of the world

► 0:11:34

The Umstat family gave the first reading, beginning with Jesus’ own words:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

JOHN 8:12 ↗ (NIV)

Why do we light candles? Because they remind us “that our waiting will come to an end. Just as the Christ came as a baby in Bethlehem, he will come again to us in a way we do not expect.” Then they read Isaiah’s promise:

► 0:12:41

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them. You have given them great joy, Lord; you have made them happy. They rejoice in what you have done... For you have broken the yoke that burdened them and the rod that beat their shoulders. You have defeated the nation that oppressed and exploited your people, just as you defeated the army of Midian long ago.”

ISAIAH 9:2–7 ↗ (GNT)

The reading closed with the child born for us, the government upon his shoulders, and no end to the increase of his government and peace on the throne of David, upheld “with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.”

► 0:13:26

The congregation stood to sing a setting of “In the Bleak Midwinter” — “all creation groans for a world in darkness, frozen like a stone; light is breaking in a stable for a throne” — with its refrain, *unto us a child is born, King of kings and Lord of lords*, and the carol’s old closing offering: “What can I give him, poor as I am? ... give him my heart.”

► 0:14:53

Its newer verse reached forward to the cross: “here within a manger lies the one who made the starry skies,” a baby born for sacrifice, “Christ the Messiah,” meeting “all our hopes and fears.” A less familiar carol followed, with new members joining the ensemble, and Michael invited anyone who did not know it simply to stand “in the attitude of worship.”

Luke’s account of the birth

► 0:22:35

The Espinosa family led the second reading, with the congregation reading Luke’s account together.

► 0:23:56

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world... So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”

LUKE 2:1–20 ↗ (NIV)

► 0:24:45

Then the shepherds keeping watch at night, the angel and the glory of the Lord shining around them, their terror, and the news: a Saviour has been born, the Messiah, the Lord. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared, praising God.

► 0:25:35

“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed... But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

Come, let us adore him

► 0:26:27

The church stood for “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” and then a carol about the many ways Jesus comes: to the world, with peace from heaven; to our hearts, with sins forgiven; “in joy and in sorrow,” sharing “our hopes and our fears” — and again, in answer to earth’s prayer.

► 0:35:42

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” followed, the ancient Advent prayer for the Rod of Jesse to free his own from Satan’s tyranny, with its answering refrain: *Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee.*

The Lamb who was slain

► 0:38:48

“And now, as we wait expectantly for Christ to come again and make everything right,” the final reading came from Revelation:

“And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain... And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.’”

REVELATION 5:6-14 ↗ (NASB)

► 0:39:40

Then the voices of myriads of angels around the throne, and every created thing in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea, ascribing to the one on the throne and to the Lamb blessing and honour and glory and dominion forever. The child in the manger and the Lamb on the throne are one.

► 0:40:55

The worship rose in answer — “all hail, King Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth” — and into “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”: “peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled... veiled in flesh the Godhead see.”

O holy night

► 0:45:11

Then “O Holy Night”: “Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till he appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.”

► 0:47:57

As the candles were passed down the rows, Matt offered practical wisdom for lighting them one to another: the person giving the light holds the candle straight, and the person receiving tips theirs in from the side, “so we’re not tipping wax... you don’t want to pour wax on your family. I mean, unless you do — but please don’t.”

► 0:49:29

He also made a last announcement, especially for guests: there would be no service on Christmas morning. “It’s cold, and I don’t want you to come out here early in the morning and we’re not here. Enjoy your Christmas morning with your family.” The church would gather again the following Sunday, “eager to receive you” — “no candles at that point.”

► 0:50:03

By candlelight the church finished “O Holy Night”: “Truly he taught us to love one another; his law is love and his gospel is peace. Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother, and in his name all oppression shall cease.”

► 0:53:49

The service closed with “Silent Night” — “Christ the Saviour is born” — and a benediction: “The peace of Christ, which transcends all understanding, be with you in your hearts and minds” ([Philippians 4:7](#)). “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Merry Christmas.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- [John 8:12](#) (NIV)
- [Isaiah 9:2–7](#) (GNT)
- [Luke 2:1–20](#) (NIV)
- [Revelation 5:6–14](#) (NASB)
- [Philippians 4:7](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. The candles remind us that “our waiting will come to an end.” What are you waiting on God for this season, and how does Christ’s first coming give you hope for it?
2. Isaiah promised light to people walking in darkness. Where have you seen that light break into darkness in your own life or in someone you love?
3. The shepherds hurried to see and then spread the word, while Mary treasured these things in her heart. Which response comes more naturally to you, and why?
4. How does seeing the child in the manger as the Lamb on the throne in Revelation 5 change the way you celebrate Christmas?
5. Who could you share the peace and light of Christ with in the week after Christmas?

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Hope Chapel’s Christmas Eve service was led by senior pastor Matt Ryniker, who welcomed the congregation, thanked the teams serving that night and guided the candle lighting, with Michael and the worship team leading the carols. The Umstat and Espinosa families gave the Advent readings from John, Isaiah and Luke, and a final reading from Revelation looked ahead to Christ’s return.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp5jo4Xrg1o&t=0s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.