



CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24, 2025

St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Portland, OR

THE LESSONS: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96;
John 1:1-7; Luke 2:1-7

THE SERMON: The Light That Keeps
the Promise

Grace and Peace to you in the NAME of GOD: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction: Living Between Darkness and Light

There is something holy about Christmas Eve. The sanctuary is hushed. The lights are low. And yet there's a quiet energy in the room—like we're all holding our breath. We're standing between what *is* and what *could be*, between darkness and light, promise and fulfillment.

It reminds me of a young church member who once said to his pastor, "I'm really trying to pay attention to the signs of the times. That's why I bought an alarm clock that emails me the news, the weather, the traffic report, and my to-do list the moment I wake up." The pastor raised an eyebrow. "And what does that tell you about the times?" The young man shrugged. "It tells me I'm still ten minutes late for everything." The pastor paused and asked, "And what does it tell you about God?" After a moment, the young man smiled. "I guess it means God isn't affected by the news, the weather, or traffic. God is still in control."

Isn't that us? We're always scanning the horizon for a sign—something unmistakable, something steady, something that makes life feel less fragile. But most days, we feel behind, overwhelmed, and unsure whether the signs are even pointing the right direction. Tonight's readings give us *two* signs from God—one spoken into ancient darkness, one blazing from eternity—and together they tell us exactly where hope is found.

Isaiah 9:2–7 — A Promise Spoken Into Collapse

When Isaiah spoke these words, everything was falling apart. The economy was broken. Leadership had failed. Security was gone. The future the people trusted no longer existed. And into that chaos, Isaiah dares to proclaim: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light... You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy... For the yoke of their burden... you have broken.”

This is not wishful thinking. This is not a pep talk. This is God declaring, *“I am not finished. I will keep My promise—even when everything you rely on collapses.”*

And then comes the astonishing announcement: “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us... Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His authority and peace there will be no end.”

That’s why we are here tonight. Not because life feels easy—but because it doesn’t. We come to hear God say again, *“See? I told you the promise wasn’t dead.”*

John 1:1–5 — The Light That Started Everything

But the story doesn’t end with a promised king.

John takes us even further back—before Bethlehem, before creation itself: “In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God... In Him was life, and that life was the light of all people.”

John tells us that the baby in the manger is not just a ruler—He is the reason galaxies spin, oceans surge, and breath fills your lungs. The One who spoke light into existence stepped into our darkness—not with force, but with love; not with a throne, but with a cradle.

The peace we chase. The stability we crave. The meaning we long for—none of it comes from tightening our grip on life. It comes from the Light of the world stepping toward us and saying, *“Walk with Me.”*

The Challenge of Christmas: “The Darkness Has Not Overcome It”

John ends his opening with words that are both comforting *and* confronting: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” That phrase carries a double meaning.

First: The darkness cannot extinguish the light.

Your grief cannot blow it out.

Your anxiety cannot smother it.

Your failures cannot dim it.

Your disappointments cannot kill it.

The Light of Christ does not flicker nervously when life gets hard.

When the darkness deepens—Christ shines *brighter*.

Second: The darkness cannot comprehend the light.

This Light is not a puzzle to solve.

You don't have to understand everything to trust Someone.

The invitation is not to think your way into God's plan—but to step into Christ's light and let Him lead.

Conclusion: The Sign You've Been Waiting For

Tonight we are not just remembering a moment in history. We are receiving a sign—a living declaration that God keeps His promises and refuses to surrender the world to darkness.

The child in the manger is the world's true King.

The eternal Word made flesh.

The sign that God will not abandon us.

So don't leave the light in the sanctuary tonight.

Carry it into the places you try to hide.

Carry it into the fears you never name.

Carry it into the questions you pretend not to have.

Let the Light invade the darkness you've learned to live with. And may that unstoppable, unexplainable, unquenchable Light guide you, challenge you, strengthen you, and surprise you in the year ahead.

(ELW 244, Rejoice! Rejoice Believers)