



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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CANON WENDY CLAIRE BARRIE, CANON FOR INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRIES  
CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24, 2021, 4:00 PM SERVICE  
ISAIAH 9:2-7; LUKE 1:39-55

## LIGHT OF THE WORLD

When I was six years old, I came home from church on Christmas Eve, made my little brother put on his bathrobe, plopped a dish towel on top of his head, and brought him into the living room, where I draped a lacy crocheted afghan over my own head and shoulders, tightly swaddled my doll Tabitha in a flannel receiving blanket, and directed my first nativity pageant. The story we tell every year on this night, the one that so vividly lives in our hearts and imaginations, is about the Holy Family, Mary and Joseph and Jesus, but it is also deeply and truly, a story about us.

You may know the story of the day you were born. You may hold the story of

the birth of your child, or a sibling. When you were born, stars danced and angels sang. Every birth is a miracle, and every child is holy. How do I know? Let me tell you another story:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters... And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”

The very first thing that God spoke into being was light. And in this story, every time God makes something, God looks at it and calls it good. God creates

us—humans—in God’s own image and calls us good. We carry within us the light of our creator. We are light bearers, all of us.

During the Christmas pageant at Saint Mark’s, when we get to the part where Jesus is born, the manger glows. Mary and Joseph wear golden haloes that catch and reflect the light. Here’s a secret about Baby Marilee, who played Jesus on Tuesday night: she glows, too. And so does her sister Esme, and so do her parents, who played Mary and Joseph. So do you.

Mary brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes just like I swaddled my doll, just like my mother swaddled my brother and me, because babies love to be swaddled, they are calmed and soothed by the snugness of the cloth wrapped around them. There was no room for them in the inn because the busy inn was no place to deliver a baby. Mary needed privacy, quiet and warmth, perhaps in the room on the ground

floor, where the most important animals—the cow, the ox, and the donkey—would be brought in at night for safekeeping. The manger may have been a hollow in the floor, with fresh, sweet-smelling hay, the perfect spot for a baby to snuggle down. Jesus, God’s own child, was born in this simple, ordinary way. God comes to us in the messy, everyday miracles of life and love.

One Godly Play story begins like this: “There once was someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things that people just had to ask him who he was. Once when they asked him, he said, ‘I am the light...’”

Another time, Jesus told the ones listening to his stories, “*You* are the light of the world.” The light shines in each of us. By this light, we see God in each other: in family, friends, and strangers. Through small acts of kindness and courage, the light grows and spreads. Everyone glows with the light of God’s love. Everyone is holy.

**Luke 1:39-55** *[And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.]*



*Saint Mark's Cathedral lives in a grounded faith and spirituality; we seek to liberate people for ministry. We are grounded in ancient Christian scripture and tradition while at the same time remaining open to the insight and truth of contemporary life. You'll find Saint Mark's Cathedral actively involved in service and outreach to our community. Together we pray, worship, study the scriptures, and explore the richness of twenty-one centuries of Christian experience. Wherever you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here!*