

## Sermon: Shine the light of love everywhere. John 1:1-9. Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> 2025

**Prayer:** Creator God, we are thankful for this year of 2025. Grant us strength and vision for a world of healing and love for everyone. Shine your light upon your people everywhere. Amen

**Introduction:** It is the season of gift giving, the presents we received, the memories we created, the joys that made us laugh. The memories of those no longer with us give courage to continue life's journey. We are sincerely grateful for the past year and we welcome 2025. We are thankful for new life, possibilities and renewal of hope. Tomorrow is Epiphany and Orthodox brothers and sisters will celebrate the feast of Epiphany. We will take down the Christmas decorations and store them away for the next season.

“The Word became flesh and dwell among us.”

The story of Christmas celebration began many thousands of years ago. Imagine the world is a beautiful garden, with birds singing and flowers blooming, mountain streams flowing and mighty oceans glistening under a bright golden sun, snow falling, lakes that freeze during winter and rain drops water the earth for food to grow for all living creatures. In the midst of that garden, God placed human beings with every good thing to sustain life. This is a powerful image to hold in our hearts for 2025. It is a life-giving image. Jesus Christ brings the light of love to the world.

God's love and desire for fellowship with humanity has not changed. God intentionally disguised in the form of a tiny Baby named Jesus. The Christmas story is one of the deepest of human mysteries. There, waiting patiently is the young mother whose name is Mary. An angel appeared to her in a dream and asked her to believe the incredible mystery that her son would be the Saviour of the world. This message seems unbelievable to people today, but Mary helps us to believe the angel. Mary answered; **“I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled”** (Luke 1:38).

There beside Mary in the stable stands her husband, a patient and loving man named Joseph. Joseph believes in Mary. Some sheep and oxen and a lowly donkey complete the scene. Later were joined by some shepherds who kept their sheep on a hillside. We learned that later the magi from the east would bear gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

We have seen his star,” they said, “and they worshipped him.” Around the world people love celebrating Christmas whether some of them believe the story or not. On my last trip to St Lucia, the guide stopped under a tree in the forest. He asked if anyone can identify the tree. No. He asked us to touch the bark and smell our hands. I figured it was some kind of incense. We saw and smelled the frankincense tree.

John's gospel tells us in beautiful, but somewhat deep language: ***“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. What has come into being with him was life; and the life was light of all people. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.”***

John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation. It raises multiple questions. Who is the Word? When did this Word begin? What did the Word do? Who is the light? Where will the light shine? Who will receive it? How will it happen? How much will it cost? Most importantly is the personal question to reflect on: *Is it for me? How do I share the light of love with everyone?* This reading holds a tangle of mysteries. It will take a life-long journey of untangling these questions.

As followers of Jesus this is the true meaning of Christmas. God came into the world as a human being, living with us through all the struggles and joys of life's experiences. In our world of broken relationships people are estranged from God. God so love us that God comes offering hope, forgiveness, compassion, and healing. God calls everyone to new beginnings. "And the life was the light of all people."

John calls us to stay in the story, to watch, listen, reflect and learn the unfolding. In so doing we acknowledge the self-giving love for which human beings were created. We strive to make it known. The magi did not linger too long at the stable.

They went onwards to tell the **Good News: God is with us, saving all people.** As early as creation the Spirit is finding entrance into human hearts. God is always seeking to restore God's beloved children. The Christmas story is God's love being manifested daily afresh in human lives. The angels sang about "Peace on earth and goodwill among us." It affirms that every person on earth is a child created and loved by God.

I read a story: *"Traveling back to Earth, having just walked on the moon, Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell had an experience for which nothing in his life had prepared him. Mitchell gazed through the window of his space capsule at his home, a small distant planet called Earth. For the first time he acknowledged that we are truly one family. His experience changed his perspective of the world in which we live and call home."*

William Sloan Coffin, Jr., commenting on Mitchell's experience wrote: *"I was thrilled once to hear him tell his tale, but I couldn't help thinking, 'You shouldn't have had to go to the moon to have that vision; it's enough to go to or hear the story of Jesus' birth.* The Good News is: all human beings are members of one family of the Holy Child, brothers and sisters from the east, west, north and south. We are created equal and loved by the Creator **and the life was light of all people.** My friends this is the **mystery of our faith.**

As we journey through the year of 2025, the story of Christmas is now beginning and it will not be finished until the star that shone over the stable on that night of all nights shines in the heart of every child, and person upon this earth. This is the star that gives hope, peace, dignity, life and light to our lives. It is the star of a loving God who created us for living in community with one another.

You are the star that shines brightly for justice, truth and love. We are the messengers bringing the message of love through the gifts we share with each other. We re-energize life and shine light with our words and lives. We pray for the Holy Spirit to help us reflect on the life of Christ whom we love and serve. What does it mean for us this New Year personally and as a community of faith? What will give us security in these times? How are we coping with the

limitations for ministry? How satisfied are our spiritual needs? Through it all we walk humbly with our God.

These are some thoughts for us to ponder as we move forward. It is my prayer that we will discover the face of God in each other. We will see and feel the presence of God's grace and truth as we worship together. We will grow in faith and understanding of God's mission to our community. We will become bold disciples to take up the cross and follow Jesus even when the journey seems challenging.

John uses the term Word to help us understand that Jesus was God, with God, before all things. John gives us layer upon layer of mystery to unfold. It is a life long journey of learning and unfolding through daily experiences of joys and challenges. It is not an easy task to figure out. The gift of grace, allows the light to shine enlightening and scattering the darkness. We are learning together through the daily trials and joys of life.

**“And the Word became flesh and lived among us?” Amen**

**Prayers for the people:** Request ? God of mercy. Response hear us.

God of new life, even though you take the future from our hands, you give us a way to help, calling us to a kind of hope that goes beyond all understanding. We hope for peace and reconciliation in places besieged by conflict, for justice in the face of oppression and for healing in mind, body and spirit. **God of mercy: hear us.**

O God, your light has come to fill us with new life, to defend the cause of those who are poor, to deliver those who are in need of food, shelter and work. Help us to be caring be the light of your love to family, neighbours and seniors who are unable to be here. **God of mercy: hear us.**

Loving God, we pray for protection for all children returning to school for the new-year. Bless teachers, guardians, parents and caregivers. You are the source of knowledge and wisdom may we be channels of your grace and wisdom. Send your Holy Spirit to counsel our children in their decision making. **God of mercy: hear us.**

God of healing, we offer prayers for those who are ill and in grief, grant healing to your people. We pray for ourselves. **God of mercy: hear us.**

Bless this ministry here and give wisdom with discerning where you are leading your people for 2025. Help us to receive the light of love and to willing share your Word to bring new life to this community. Bless all people who use this facility that in so doing they too may encounter God among us.

We pray together as you taught your disciples: Our Father...

Rev. Margaret MacDonald