

Introduction to the Day

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.



The Readings on This Day

****Click on the links for the Bible Verse(s)*

Christmas Eve

By the fourth century, Christians had adapted the Roman festival at the winter solstice as a day to celebrate the incarnation of God in Jesus. Christ is the Sun, bringing light and life to the world. For Christmas, all three years of the lectionary appoint both the Lukan infancy narrative and the poem that begins John's gospel. Assemblies that worship on Christmas Eve but not Christmas Day might use Palm/Passion Sunday as a model: Luke—the most beloved infancy story—can be proclaimed as a processional gospel at the one service, and John—the Bible's primary theological proclamation of the incarnation—can serve as the gospel of the day.

[Isaiah 9:2-7](#)

That the angels in Luke name the child the Messiah, in Greek "Christ," recalls oracles such as Isaiah 9, and Christians have seen in Jesus Christ the ancient promises of a coming king fulfilled. Jesus is "wonderful Counselor and mighty God" among us. Thus Christians hear in this oracle references to the triune God.

[Titus 2:11-14](#)

As is often the case, the second reading indicates the implications of the gospel for the church: the appearance of God in Jesus Christ creates a people redeemed, purified, and dedicated to a life of good works. Christ among us changes our identity, our style of life, and the goal of our existence.

[Luke 2:1-14 \[15-20\]](#)

Luke 2, the only biblical narrative detailing the birth of Jesus, is proclaimed at the first eucharist of Christmas. In contrast to Matthew's interest in high status males, Luke emphasizes the opposite: a pregnant woman, "no place in the inn," and lower-class shepherds. Thanks in part to Luke's talent in storytelling, this narrative has become for many people synonymous with Christmas. The challenge at this service is to proclaim the truth of this narrative as other than and far beyond stereotypical sentimentality.