



# St Peter's by the Lake Anglican Church



The Holy Innocents  
December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Sermon Preached by  
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"Light that embraces us all"



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## Theme: The Light That Embraces us All

On this holy night, we gather with candles, with familiar words and sacred melodies, because we know—deep down—that darkness does not get the final say. The Scriptures we have heard tonight speak with one voice: light breaks in. Not because the world is ready for it, not because everything is calm and ordered, but precisely because it is not.

Isaiah's words are spoken inside a world that knows oppression, weariness, and fear:

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

Notice what kind of darkness this is. It is not simply the absence of light; it is the darkness of people who have been walking, living, enduring, carrying burdens.

A week on, after the candles continue to burn for those who died in recent terror attacks, be they here in Australia, the United States, or, unfortunately, multiple occurrences in South Africa. There are parts of the world still in conflict, bloody conflict, and many countries laid waste through violence. And then, there is the darkness that some of us carry with us through our own lives. Although we may feel isolated at times, many are walking, living, enduring, carrying their burdens, and feel forsaken.

At the foot of the candles here, 15 stones are placed to remind us of our connectedness with our Creator God. From the earth we came, unto the earth we return. Words sometimes fail us, but a simple act of placing a rock in a sacred space can help remind us that we are God's creation, and that no matter what we endure, God is with us.

Indeed, that is why this night is so important. We celebrate the coming of Emmanuel, God-with-us. We remember how, in the still of the night, a baby was born in a place that is no stranger to violence. The impoverished beginnings of the story of Jesus, the one who saves, interrupted the night in Bethlehem and have continued to interrupt other dark places across the world.

St John's gospel tells us of the 'light coming into the world'. In the first book of Moses, the separation of brightness and gloom heralds creation. That light, fully present in God's love for us, provides a counterpoint to the dark places and encourages us to share it with others, especially when their burdens or concerns envelop them in a sense of darkness and aloneness.

And the light that comes is not tentative or fragile. Isaiah calls it great. It does more than decorate the darkness; it interrupts it. It re-names it. It changes what is possible.

That same interruption happens in Luke's Gospel. The shepherds are doing what they always do—working the night shift, watching, waiting, keeping danger at bay. Then suddenly, without warning, the ordinary night is torn open. The glory of the Lord shines around them—no wonder they are terrified.

On the advertising for Christmas, and indeed, on the cover of our order of service tonight, is a disruptive moment in our own skies a few weeks back. Bursts of colour resulting from a massive solar storm broke into our world. Imagine for a moment if you did not know about the Southern Lights. Imagine if you heard a commotion and looked up to see the sky green, pink, white, and glowing.

It can be easy to see how the shepherds responded to the glow they saw; it would have been overwhelming. Yet the first word spoken into that fear is not judgment, but reassurance: “Do not be afraid.”

That is how God's light works. It tells the truth about the darkness—without denying it—but refuses to let fear control the story. “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” Not for the powerful first, not for the confident or the well-prepared, but for those on the margins, those awake in the night, those unsure what tomorrow will bring.

St Paul, writing to Titus, describes this moment with beautiful simplicity: “The grace of God has appeared.” Grace appears. Like dawn. Like light that cannot be hidden behind clouds forever. Grace does not wait for us to get our act together; it arrives. It teaches us how to live, not by fear or force, but by hope—training us to live lives formed by love, justice, and self-giving.

And here is the heart of the mystery of Christmas: this light is not an idea, not a feeling, not a moral improvement plan. This light is a child. Wrapped in cloth and laid in a feeding trough. The light that holds the universe together chooses to be held in human arms. Heaven and earth are drawn together, not by spectacle, but by vulnerability.

Psalm 96 invites the whole creation to rejoice—to sing, to praise, to declare God's glory among the nations. Christmas is not a private comfort; it is a heavenly announcement. The light of Christ holds together angels and shepherds, empires and infants, past promises and future hope. It holds

together justice and mercy, truth and tenderness.

And so tonight, Christmas is not only something we remember; it is something we receive. The light comes into our darkness. Into the places we would rather keep hidden. Into grief that still aches, relationships that are strained, fears we carry quietly, and uncertainties about what lies ahead. The promise of Christmas is not that the darkness disappears instantly, but that it is no longer alone.

And we are not meant to keep this light to ourselves. Candles only make sense when they are shared. We are called to reflect this light—in kindness offered when it would be easier to walk past, with forbearance when tempers are short, in courage when faith feels costly. We carry Christ's light into homes, workplaces, schools, and communities that often settle for shadows because they have forgotten that something brighter is possible.

For us, deep into the end of 2025, we recall the beginning of God-with-us. With an intense sense of sadness and irony, we also remember the blackness that parts of our world are in. As a sign of togetherness, people of many faiths have stood together with the burdened and saddened, seeking to bring more light into our troubled world.

St John reminds us that in the Hymn to the Word, there is an eternal truth. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness cannot contain it. It spreads. It illuminates. It additionally reveals the shadows, but for us, this light includes hope, peace, joy and love. And love, born in Bethlehem so long ago, continues to lift its countenance upon us, and we behold it now with grace upon grace.

Tonight, as we sing with the angels, we remember this enduring truth: no darkness is too deep, no night too long, no life beyond God's reach. The light of Christ holds it all—and it embraces us.

\*Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favours.\*