

## CHRISTMAS EVE, YEAR A, DECEMBER 24, 2025

On Christmas Eve, we gather in the glow of lights. Candles flicker. Trees sparkle. Streets shine a little brighter tonight with a myriad of Christmas lights. There is something about light that draws us in especially when the nights are long and the darkness feels heavy. And tonight, I want us to think about light in a way that stretches both our imagination and our faith—from the skies above us to the child laid in a manger.

Few sights on earth are as breathtaking as the northern lights. Curtains of green, red, blues and purple, and fire-like waves stretch and dance across the sky, leaving people in silence and awe. Scientists explain them, travelers chase them, cameras try to capture them and people attempt to understand their magical, mystical awe inspiring sight. Because light breaking into darkness always feels like a miracle.

In fact ancient cultures viewed them from a variety of perspectives – everything from being a good omen to evil spirits. The one I like the most is that some native tribes thought they were from the original fire the creator had formed and the lights are the creators' way of telling the people that he remembered them and was watching over them.

As the colors dance and undulate across the sky creating marvelous spectacles they are just a small snapshot or a glimpse of the beauty and awe the Hubble telescope has brought us from space. Those images show us the creative power that explodes it's majestic beauty throughout space: blazing stars, glowing galaxies and vast cosmic beauty. We now know that much of what we see in the night sky is ancient light. Light that began traveling before humans even existed. Light that crossed unimaginable distances just to reach our eyes. The universe is filled with light—but also with overwhelming darkness.

Darkness is something every person understands. Darkness can mean fear, confusion, sin, sorrow, injustice, or hopelessness. From the very beginning of Scripture, darkness appears—but so does God's light. The Bible opens with darkness covering the deep that is obliterated by God's words of creation and hope: *"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."* God spoke light into darkness. This shows us a powerful truth: darkness never has the final word. God's light does. The truth is no matter how brilliant the northern lights are they will eventually fade as will the brightness of space eventually grow dim. But Scripture tells us of a Light that never fades—a Light no sky can outshine and that is the light of Jesus Christ.

In my former parish at the end of the Christmas Eve service and after we sang Silent Night I would read the passage from John that says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John's gospel points us to the skies, where we will see a star-lit world, urging us to see God's light born in Jesus. As John says, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Jesus is the source of the light.

Tonight we celebrate once again that light coming to us in a most remarkable way. For God did not send a star just to be admired from a distance. God sent the son not as a burst of blinding glory, but as a baby. The Light of the world didn't arrive in a palace. He arrived in poverty. He didn't appear to the powerful first. He appeared to shepherds working the night shift. The Light entered the darkness quietly but intentionally.

When you look at the Northern Lights they are beautiful but untouchable. Stars are brilliant but impossibly far away. The Christmas story reminds us that the light of Jesus is

different. God did not remain distant rather God stepped into our world. Into our mess. Into our suffering. This Light could be held. This Light could cry. This Light would grow, teach, heal, forgive, and ultimately give His life. The Creator of galaxies chose closeness over distance.

The truth is the aurora borealis may brighten the night sky, but it cannot drive out the darkness of the human heart. Only Christ can do that. Think about this for a moment. The northern lights are visible only in certain places, under certain conditions. When we stare up into the night sky stars may humble us and we know space itself is vast, cold and silent and as magnificent and awe inspiring these images from the Hubbel telescope and the northern lights are its beauty and light cannot speak forgiveness. Its glow cannot offer hope. Its brightness cannot show love.

Isaiah prophesied: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." This is not a light for decoration but a light for direction. This is a light for: Those walking through grief. Those burdened by guilt. Those confused about their purpose. Those weary from the darkness of the world. Jesus doesn't just light up the sky—He lights our path.

Space reminds us how much darkness exists just as our world reminds us too. We feel it—in wars, injustice, loneliness, and fear. We feel it personally—in broken relationships, hidden struggles, quiet despair. But Christmas declares this truth: Darkness is real, but it is not final.

The Light has come. And the darkness has not overcome it. The lights we put up on Christmas is not just to illumine the darkness but it is to point to the true light that came into the world on Christmas. The lights represent hope, joy even spiritual illumination. But the lights we hang also evoke feelings of warmth, togetherness and nostalgia for cherished holiday memories.

What Christmas memory still lights up and warms your heart? I remember when I was 9 years old and my dad was renovating the living room. It was a project that was done at night after he came home from work. My dad loved Christmas and decorating our house. Our house was the most lit up house on the block which also had to do with the fact that he was an electrical engineer. But this particular Christmas the outside of the house had been decorated but inside there were saw horses with plywood across them in the middle of the living room as my parents worked to finish the room. That Christmas Eve I went to bed with my parents still hanging wallpaper and not a tree, decoration or present in sight. The next morning, there was the tree, our stockings and presents and a newly renovated living room. The sacrifice my parents made to make Christmas happen just to see the joy light up our faces is just a small understanding of how God goes out of the way to create light and life for us.

At the end of the service we will each light a candle and we will see how it not only changes a dark room but how the light multiplies. That is how the Light of Christ works. It spreads. It endures. It cannot be extinguished.

On this holy night, God's invitation is simple: Look up—but also look within. The same God who painted the Northern Lights, who scattered stars across space, has come near to you in Jesus Christ. This Light is not to be admired. It is to be received. Jesus says: "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The light of Christ Jesus not only shines on us it shines in us and through us. That's why Jesus told us to let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good

works. When we live in love, truth, forgiveness, and obedience, we become reflections of the Light of Christ in a dark world

Tonight, as we remember His birth, may we trust this truth: The Light that created the universe has stepped into our darkness and still shines—gentle, powerful, and full of hope. So when the world dazzles you with brilliance, remember this truth: No light in the heavens, no star in space can ever outshine the Light of Jesus Christ. May you and I, through the light and love of Jesus, shine his message of compassion and mercy and may we sing with the angels, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom God rests. Amen.