**Sermon Text**: John 1:1-18

**Occasion**: Christmas Day, 25 Dec 2022

**Light in the Darkness of Winter Snow**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you in the name of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.****2****He was in the beginning with God.****3****All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.****4****In him was life, and the life was the light of men.****5****The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* (John 1)

This year we have had some very unusual weather for Christmas in Victoria. I personally was fine with having a white Christmas and the mountains of snow made me nostalgic for my hometown of Calgary. It would be usual there to not have a lot of snow and freezing weather conditions around Christmas. The problem is that this is not the norm for Victoria and the specific weather set up for this weekend has made the holidays difficult. We probably all hoped to have a normal Christmas this year. We wanted be able to gather with family and friends to celebrate the same traditions we usually did before the pandemic. The hope was for a delightful Christmas freed from poor circumstances, but that does not quite seem to be the case. All this goes to show that there remains some darkness in this world that needs to be overcome.

This fact was made fairly obvious to me last week on Dec 21—which is the longest night of the year with the winter solstice. That night we were to have a Lament Service recognizing that not everything is perfect during the holidays. On account of the weather, not being able to have the service in person was an ironic example of how things are less than ideal. A more general example of the perfect is that during the holidays, when we usually gather with family to celebrate, that the deaths of loved ones and past painful arguments tend to be remembered the most. So, holidays often tend to have a note of darkness to them if our attention sways over to the strains and stresses of the season. However, our Lord still shines in the darkness. Although the in-person Lament Service was cancelled, the online service was recorded so that we could come together virtually to share our griefs with the Lord. The message of God’s loving grace still went out and it gave those who watched the blessings that can only come through God’s word. And even if we never had the service, the hope and promises of God would still remain. They would still enlighten our hearts amidst the darkness of the world. The joy of Christ—his life, death, and resurrection—remains unaltered. Nothing in this world can ever take that away from us.

Christ coming on Christmas morn, his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave are etched into history itself. These things cannot be undone. And since we have the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, we can be assured that our Lord has triumphed over sin, death, and the devil for us. The mercies of our Lord cannot be undone. And since our Lord lived, died, and rose again for you, this means that the blessings of your forgiveness and everlasting life cannot be undone. These gifts of God are protected by our Lord Himself in heavens (1 Peter 1:3-5). As surely as the Lord lives and faith lives in you, so surely will your salvation be secure. Come whatever may in this world, the mercy of the Lord endures forever (Ps 100:5).

Our Lord will always comfort us in His mercy. He does not abandon us but comes to us in our need. On Christmas Day, the good news of our Lord’s blessings rang out in the darkness of this world. And today the good news continues to be spread to the ends of the earth. It is my joy and privilege to share with you this message this morning: that Christ has come into this world to deliver you from your sins and bring you into the everlasting grace of God. In Christ you are saved and secure. Regardless of whatever is happening with the weather, with our society, with the economy, or with the temptations of your flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ will always be here with his people to guide his people into the mercies of our God.

We can count our blessings here this morning that we still have each other, we still have the service, and we still have the technology to bring the good news of Christ beyond the walls of Hope Lutheran Church. These are mercies from God in a time of trial and they serve to encourage us as we hear the good news that Christ came into this world on Christmas morning. The situation in the first century was not the best either. There was political upheaval with a king willing to murder children to keep his throne (Matt 2:16) and unfaithful religious leaders who were leading people away, not toward, God’s word (Matt 23:23). Yet, Christ came into this time of spiritual darkness to enlighten the people in God’s love. Christ came to bring people out of their sin and out of the wickedness of godless leaders to give them the hope of eternal life. Nothing in this world could stop Jesus from doing this.

This is why John declared that *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it* (John 1:5). As much disappointment and wickedness may envelop the world, none of this can truly stop our risen Lord. Evil may seek to overcome what is good, but that cannot happen. Evil is truly like darkness. Darkness has no substance. It is merely an absence of light. Evil has no substance in itself, it is an absence of God and His goodness. For something to be evil, it must be deprived of the love and justice of our Lord. Light, on the other hand, does have substance. It beams across distances and illuminates what it hits and refracts off of. Everything you see is seen because light comes off from it.

If there is light, then darkness cannot overcome it. Darkness is an absence of light. Therefore, if you have light, then there cannot be darkness. And if you have the love and goodness of God, then evil cannot overcome it. Evil is an absence of God, so if God comes, then there can be no evil where He resides (cf. John 9:4-5). Christ came as the Light of the World on Christmas Day and the evils of the world sought to rise up against him. King Herod attempted to murder the Christchild. Pharisees and other unfaithful religious leaders tried to shut Jesus up. Unbelieving Jews tried to kill Jesus at the cross. But whatever evil came up against Jesus, no evil could overcome Jesus. He remains. He lives. And he brings life to all those with faith in him. Evil cannot withstand the presence of Christ.

Even today, when we have many things in this world dragging us away from proper worship and devotion to God, nothing in heaven above or earth below can prevent our Lord from loving you through Jesus Christ (Rom 8:38-39). Nothing stopped Christ from being born. Nothing could stop Christ dying for our sins. And nothing could stop Jesus overcoming death in the resurrection. The Light of Christ shines through the darkness. His promise of salvation shines on in the darkness of the world. No matter how dim we assume the Light to be, it remains shining all the same.

The problem we face is that there are shadows of darkness in the world. The evils of the world cannot overcome Christ or his mercies given to us. His light of salvation still shines in the darkness. The issue is that evils hide around nooks and crannies of the world and of our hearts. Darkness can never overcome light but light may cast shadows. For example, the poor weather hindering our enjoyment of the Light of Christ on Christmas. Rain and snow are good things for our ecosystem, but too much can cause dangerous conditions for driving. This evil crouches behind the good of the water we need. Similarly, the Light of Christ has come into the world but there are shadows of evil left behind. This is what we are experiencing now. We are experiencing the effects of sin within the world although Christ has won the victory over sin and death at the cross.

So, now we are awaiting the time when the Light of Christ will illuminate all of Creation that we may bask in the Light of God. This will come when Christ comes, not on Christmas Day, but on the Last Day. And on that day evil will be no more because the goodness of God will fill all things. Evil will be completely overcome in the new creation. We see this come up in the book of Revelation where it says that, after this world has passed away, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. In the new earth there will be no need for the sun or moon for God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ will be the Light of this new world (Rev 21:23-25). There will be no night for darkness will not exist there. While it is uncertain how literal we can take these words, we can definitely say that there will be no evil in the new creation because God Himself will cast out all darkness.

So, despite all the issues that we are facing at present, whether it be the weather, lack of people at Christmas dinner, or anything else, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ still shines his light through it all. The love and goodness of Christ remain with us and nothing can strip us of it. Even if every worldly good was stripped from us, as it was Job (Job 1-2; 42:1-6), our Lord would still be sitting with us in the ashes. He would still overcome the evils we face. He would still bring us out of sorrow into the paradise to come. Just as it was in the beginning when Christ was the Light who brought life to all of creation, so it is now where Christ continues to give life through his cross, and, of course, so will it be forever and ever as Christ dwells with his people in the world to come. Amen.

The peace that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.