

God seems to do His best work at night, when all is dark. It was at night, we're told, when the shepherds were out in the field. Into this darkness the angel appeared and spoke the good news that the Savior, Christ the Lord, was born.

Let's back up around four thousand years or so. When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth, we're told, was in darkness. And into this darkness God spoke, and there was light.

It seems as if God only speaks when all is dark. And not just when the sun has set as on Christmas Eve. It's when His people are in darkness that God speaks.

When they were suffering in Egypt under Pharaoh, God spoke through Moses, "*Let My people go.*" When they were in exile in a foreign country, through Cyrus God spoke, to return them to their homeland. And even though this is Christmas, we must look at Good Friday. When all was dark, Jesus spoke from the cross, "*It is finished!*" and your salvation was completed.

God has good things to say, comforting things, when He speaks in the darkness. How good and how comforting for you, when at your baptism God spoke through your pastor, and you were brought from death to life, from the darkness into the light. You were brought to Jesus, for He is the Light. "*In Him,*" writes John in our text, "*was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*"

King Herod tried to overcome that light. He sent his soldiers to Bethlehem for this ghastly purpose. But he failed. Satan, in the wilderness, tried to overcome that light. But he, too, failed. It would be easier to overcome the light of the sun than to overcome the light who is Christ. Not even the gates of hell can do that. But they are trying, aren't they? This world appears to be getting darker and darker. Evil is on the march. And where evil spreads, there is darkness.

Yet God's words to us in our text for this Christmas Day are sure and steadfast. "*The light shines in the darkness.*" God does His best work in the dark. Where our world is being enveloped by darkness, God's voice rings out with the good news of Jesus, and lost sinner after lost sinner are claimed by Christ.

What about you? Are you standing in the light, or is the darkness overtaking you? Evil is on the march, and it wants to overcome you with darkness. The sin in your life is dark, very dark. I know this, for so is my own sin. Sin hates the light because light exposes sin for what it is. It is pure evil. It is rebellion against God. And the darkness of our sin would turn us away from the light, away from God. But then we would live forever in darkness

But on this Christmas Day, we rejoice that the true Light has come into our dark world, indeed, into our own hearts and lives. And no matter how dark we are, the light of Christ shines in our darkness.

Darkness cannot overcome the light, but the light overcomes the darkness. And in this way: it conquers it by taking it into itself. This is why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He came to suffer and die on the cross where He, the true Light, would take your darkness, your sin, into Himself. What good news this truly is!

Now again, I ask: Are you standing in the light? Repentance is to confess that daily the darkness of our sin overtakes us. But darkness does not have the final word. God does. And what He declares is so beautiful, so comforting, that we can scarcely believe it. Indeed, only by God's grace are we able to believe it. What God declares is absolutely sure and certain.

He says this: that your status before Him is not determined by how you live, by how dark your sins have been. Your status with Him is determined by His grace toward you. Your baptism into Christ, who is the Light, cannot be overcome by the darkness of your sins. Rather, your baptism marks you as one who is forgiven of all sin, redeemed by Christ the Crucified, and one who possesses a place in heaven forever.

God did not send His Son into a world of light. Jesus was sent into the darkness. And so also was He sent to you in your baptism so that, no matter how many times you have fallen into sin, into darkness, you have a loving Savior into whose pierced hands you can always fall, into whose light all darkness must retreat.

On this Christmas Day, rejoice, believing the truth that God does His best work when all is dark. His best work is seen in you. For where you were once in darkness, you are now light in the Lord. Christ, your Light, shines in the darkness, and He cannot be overcome. Merry Christmas!