

It's Time to Shine and Give God the Glory

Isaiah 52:7-10, Psalm 98

In our first reading, Isaiah declares that it's time to break forth together into singing (even the broken ones among us), for the Lord has comforted his people; He has redeemed Jerusalem; He has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

The birth of Jesus, sent by God out of His great love for the

world, is

known all around the world. Christmas is celebrated everywhere. Even where it's illegal to do so, it is done secretly. Wherever meek hearts will receive him in faith, the Christ child enters still. God appears and speaks through his Son!

Here in Australia, our society may have overlayed the central message with layers of wrapping paper and traditions focussing on gift-giving and partying, adding

figures of Santa and elves, of trees and baubles that commercialise the season as early as the beginning of November — but the message remains.

Peace and joy, goodwill among the peoples of the world because God has acted to give us his son, to shine light on, and bring comfort to, those sitting in darkness. Our response is the same as the angels singing and praising God. He is both present and coming still. God has bared his right arm and given us a great victory. All nations will come to him. Gentiles, too, see his light! Other religions have festivals of light, but none so inclusive or as widely accepted by non-believers, as Christmas.

Unless theirs is completely broken, most people celebrate families during Christmas, or as they may prefer to call it, 'The holiday season'. Many non-Christians spend a lot of money in order to host or create the ideal happy setting of a comfortable, well-fed gathering of loving friends and family.

Some have discovered that the tinsel and flashing lights, the running around getting the perfect present and dinner table to please or impress, doesn't heal brokenness, and may in fact just bring greater stress and hurts. They know something more is needed to heal the brokenness of past and present hurts.

Praise God that celebrating his presence in the world is not about self-indulgent spending on gifts for those who love us, but about celebrating his love for the world in the giving of his Son for all peoples, even his enemies. God comes humble, poor and in simplicity.

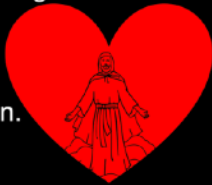
The Address

Theme: Time to Shine
and give God the Glory

Texts: Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98.



God imparts to human hearts,
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will,
receive him still
the Christ child enters in.



'There
simplicity
is given a place
of honor,
poverty is
exalted,
humility is
commended.'

'The Life of
St. Francis,
Thomas of Celano'



Now, simply celebrating the season is no guarantee that people know Jesus and why he came, or that they worship anything but themselves, or the ideal of family or world peace. So we, as the people of God, have a great opportunity to speak about, and to show the truth of, the good news of Jesus Christ.

It's highly unlikely that people will call your feet beautiful because you do this, but God will rejoice in your shining with his light, in your sharing the words of scripture that speak of the coming of Christ, and the Word incarnate 'with us'.

As you contribute to a community initiative, providing presents and a Christmas lunch for the poor, God shines through you.

Yes, these things can be, and are done by non-Christians; but your unique contribution is not devalued by that. For you personally know the one who came in the Lord's name. You know Jesus and can speak his words of grace and peace, you can give hope — not only in the charity and support programs of society, but hope in God and his promise to put all things right through his Son.

Rejoice and be genuinely happy. Sing of the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love. Bless people openly, pray for them and with them, speak God's words of promise and grace to your friends and families; to strangers and even those who hate you. Shine with God's love. Joyfully proclaim Jesus 'your king!'

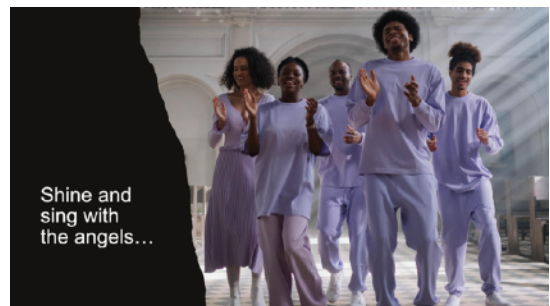
Now is your time to shine and speak the truth of God in Jesus Christ. Don't waste it as you gather as a family. Don't miss the opportunity as you select cards, gifts and books for and about Christmas each year.

Choose those things that celebrate Christ — not the worldly addition of tinsel, or myths clad in red suits and reindeer, or the distraction of partying to excess.

Instead, lovingly promote and proclaim, share and shine with the light of God's season of grace. The light of God's Son is given to save us. Christ is the centre of Christmas. Now, this day and every day is your time to shine.

'Tis the season to shine, and what an opportunity Christmas is for us to shine and proclaim Jesus as the reason for the season. And you are to shine in and out of season, because Christ has come, not just for a day of feasting, but for an eternity of blessing. People of God, it's time to shine and glorify God for Jesus.

May the light of Christmas shine in and through your hearts today, and every day, because he is Immanuel — God with us. Amen.



Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/ng8lvRYM2sl>