

TEXT: Luke 2:1-19

THEME: SHINE, O EVERLASTING LIGHT

Dear Fellow Recipients of God's Christmas Gift, His Son, Our Savior, Jesus Christ:

CUE 31—In the beginning, God's voice shook chaos with these words: (Yehee orr) **“Let there be light” (Gn 1:3)**. That's the first thing we learn about God in his Word. If you were to stop in your Bible reading at that point, that's all you would know about God—that this is a God of light...a darkness-destroying God.

CUE 32—If you were to read on, you would quickly find that God's children—his beloved ones, created in his own image—were thrown into a darkness of their own devising: the shadow of sin and the darkness of death. All of humanity, and the whole creation with it, were plunged into an inky midnight...a shadow-land.

The rest of the Old Testament tells the long, drawn-out tale not of humanity pulling itself up by its bootstraps, not of humanity valiantly reaching for the light, but of the Light—God himself—reaching toward humanity. It is the marvelous story of salvation—how God began to enact a plan to save his people and bring them into the light of his love. We see that plan unfold in the Old Testament.

CUE 33—Noah and his family escaped, were rescued, from the dark storm clouds that rained down death on the rest of the world to see a rainbow—light reflected and refracted—as a sign to this day of God's enduring promise to continue to work with his humans.

CUE 34—Abraham was told to look to the dark night sky and see pinpricks of light—stars that signified a vast number of descendants, and one particular Descendant—the Messiah—by whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

CUE 35—Moses was drawn to light on a mountainside, a burning bush that was not consumed, and was told by the great “I AM” to lead his people out of the darkness of slavery (that represents our sin) into the bright light of freedom (that represents our forgiveness) and into the Promised Land (that represents heaven).

CUE 36—flash—All the while, God's prophets proclaimed a message of light: a **“Sun of Righteousness” (Malachi 4:2)** that was on the rise, and a **“great light”** seen by **“the people walking in darkness” (Isaiah 9:2)**.

CUE 37—And God's people waited and waited and waited in their darkness...until one night, outside of Bethlehem, as shepherds—who were often considered scoundrels by their society—gazed into the dark night sky at stars, little pinpricks of light, suddenly the darkness was shattered by shining angels—a host of heavenly beings beaming with God's bright glory.

How appropriate that the God who began creation with the syllable, **“Light!”** would announce his Son's earthly beginning with darkness-destroying light as well. But if you

were to stop in your Bible reading at this point, that's all you would know about this Child—this is a Child of Light, a darkness-destroying Child.

If you were to read on, however, you would learn that this Child grew up to be a great Teacher who enlightened darkened minds, a Healer who opened darkened eyes, but most of all, the Savior—the Savior of the world—who took on himself the nightmare of our dark sin, paid for every single one with his own blood, and opened to us the bright path to heaven.

CUE 38—flash—This Child is the Light of the World. This is the Light that shines in a darkness that is powerless to overcome it. This is the promised Sun of Righteousness. This is the Light that brings light and life to all God's children. This is the One whose glory is that of the Father's only Son, **“full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).**

CUE 39—Okay, I understand. This is...a baby, a very human baby. A bright and bouncing baby boy, who was lain by his young mother in a manger for his bed, who hosted simple shepherds on his first night of earthly life, who was susceptible to mad King Herod's jealous fear.

But make no mistake! Unwrap the swaddling clothes and the human trappings, and you will reveal pure and holy Light, the Light of God himself. This is Light that will uncover your darkest, deepest, secret sins, which may be an uncomfortable thing. But this Light will also lead you out of the darkness of sin into the light of forgiveness and eternal life in heaven—light and life and love itself. We echo the words of King David: **“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1).**

CUE 40—flash—And so, this Christmas Eve, we pray, and pray aloud with me:

Shine, O Eternal Light!

Shine ON us.

Shine IN us.

Shine THROUGH us.

Lead us, O Eternal Light, to eternal life! Amen!