

**Sunday, December 21, 2025 AM**  
**CANDLELIGHT SERVICE: The Original Christmas Story**  
**Mike Teel, Pastor**

**The Candy Cane Story**

There was a time, during the latter part of the 18th century in England, when all religious symbols were banned from public display. No longer could Christian brothers and sisters recognize one another in public by the crosses they wore on their clothing, or as jewelry.

During this time, it is told, there was a dedicated Christian candy maker who set out to find some way for members of the Christian family to identify each other, in spite of the ban. He began with a piece of PURE WHITE CANDY to signify the purity and holiness of Jesus Christ. Next, he formed the candy into the shape of a SHEPHERD'S STAFF as a reminder that our Heavenly Father is the Good Shepherd. Then, he placed THREE SMALL RED STRIPES around the candy to represent the surrounding power and presence of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Finally, he placed a SINGLE BOLD RED STRIPE through the candy to demonstrate the saving power of the blood that Jesus shed upon the cross for each of us, and the forgiveness of our sins.

We hope and pray that each time you see a candy cane during the holiday season, you will be reminded of the love God has for you and the price Christ paid for your salvation. And we hope that you will use this story of the candy cane to tell others what Christ has done in your life. Doesn't it seem strange that something we often see as unimportant and insignificant can be turned into something so vibrant, so important, simply by knowing the story of its origin? And yet, the real MIRACLE is that God can take each of us, no matter how we feel about ourselves (unimportant or insignificant), and through His work, turn us into something incredible worth, value and significance. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

**The Original Christmas Story**

The Christmas story in the Bible can be found in several different places. It is mainly found in the books of Matthew and Luke. All four books of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) unfold for us the story of Jesus' miraculous birth, life and sacrificial death. Each book tells Jesus' life story from the perspective of the human writer God uses to record his Words. The books often addressed different audiences and purposes unique to the writer. Matthew tells the Christmas story from the perspective of Joseph, Jesus' human step-father, and attaches him the Kingly lineage of David. Luke sheds light on the story from Mary's perspective relating Jesus to the heritage of the priestly order. Both Matthew and Luke begin the story from right before Jesus' birth, while Mark and John jump in Jesus' later life adding details the other gospels might not have; these details help in rounding out the complete Christmas story we have today. Before we begin to allow the Scriptures to speak to us this morning, let's take a few moments to consider the meaning of the word "Christmas." While reading the Bible you will note the word "Christmas" is not used. The word itself means "Christ's Mass" a day (and season) to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus. In fact the actual meaning of the word "Christmas" translates as "Christ's Day." So at Christmas we officially celebrate the birth of Christ, when God became a Man to deliver mankind from the penalty of sin. This morning we will begin with the prophetic announcement that Jesus would eventually come into our world as a man and as God to deliver us from sins' curse.

**SONG: Joy To The World**

**THE PROPHECY: Candle of Prophecy**  
**Eric Luptak, Worship Ministry**

Early in the book of Isaiah the prophet had warned the people of Israel they were going to face some extremely grim times as victims of the International power struggles taking place around them. Because they had allowed their faithfulness to God to become weak, following after false gods, idol worship and entertaining mysticism, they found themselves unable to stand against their foes. The people would be stripped of their dignity and their possessions. The center of worship, the Great Temple, and Jerusalem itself would eventually fall into the hands of Assyria. The strong would be hauled into exile. These days were full of darkness and discouragement.

Isaiah's prediction held not only rescue for the Israelites in his day, but the ultimate rescue of all mankind from the darkness of sin in our own lives by the advent of Messiah Jesus.

**Isaiah 7:14**

***<sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.***

**Isaiah 9:1-7**

***<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. <sup>3</sup> You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. <sup>4</sup> For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. <sup>5</sup> Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.***

Jesus' Birth announced the being and character of this Messiah to come:

"God with us (Emmanuel)", Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!

And later the minor prophet Micah tells us where the Messiah was to be born.

**Micah 5:2**

***<sup>2</sup> But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.***

**SONG: O Little Town Of Bethlehem**

PROPHECY TOLD US CHRISTMAS (JESUS) WAS COMING!

## **THE MIRACULOUS BEGINNING: Candle of Miracles**

**Jeff Elbert, Celebrate Recovery**

Over 2,000 years ago, a young woman (some indicate her age between 13 – 16) from the town of Nazareth named Mary was visited by an angel named Gabriel. The Angel Gabriel told Mary that she would have a son she was to name him Jesus. This same Angel had appeared to Mary's relative (cousin), Elizabeth, six months earlier declaring she would have a child. This was after both Elizabeth and Zechariah were both well up in age and to this point childless. Jesus' cousin John would be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus preparing the way for His message of repentance and salvation.

### **Luke 1:26-38**

<sup>26</sup> *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." <sup>34</sup> "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail." <sup>38</sup> "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. Mary then wondered how this was possible since she had not been with a man. The Angel Gabriel then explains the miracle of Christ's incarnation. He was born of a virgin, just as the prophecy had predicted. At this time Mary was engaged to her soon-to-be husband, Joseph. When told, Joseph was hurt and confused because he did not believe Mary. The Angel Gabriel visited Joseph and told him to not be afraid of taking Mary to be his eventual wife.*

### **Matthew 1:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

### **VIDEO: Mary Did You Know?**

**GOD FULFILLS HIS PROMISE OF CHRISTMAS COMING!**

**THE GLORIOUS BIRTH: Candle of Glory**  
**Sean Morales, Student Ministry**

Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem because of an order from the Roman emperor that a census, or record, of all the people, be taken in their hometown. After traveling pregnant on a donkey for several days, Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem and were told there remained no places for them to stay. The inns were all full with others who had come to fulfill the census. Seeing that Mary was due at any time, an inn owner told Joseph they could spend the night in his stable behind the Inn.

**Luke 2:1-7**

*<sup>1</sup> In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

**SONG: Away In A Manger**

As Mary and Joseph settled into the stable seeking rest from their multiple day travels, the time for Mary to deliver Jesus arrived. There on the hay while all the animals and all God's creations slept Mary went into labor, and Jesus was born. The only place for the sleeping baby to rest was likely the nearest empty feeding trough known as a manger.

Thus the Savior of the World, the Only Begotten Son of God, was not born in the fanciest of hospitals among the dignitaries of the World but, in a small insignificant city in Judea, to two peasant parents who both had great heritages, in a lowly stable surrounded by the animals housed there, eventually to be laid in the animal feeding trough that served as His cradle. What a beginning for the Light of This World. THE ANGELS DECLARED CHRISTMAS WAS HERE!

**THE CELEBRATION: Candle of Celebration**  
**Jay Driskill, Senior Adults Ministry**

During this time, an angel appeared to shepherds who were watching their flocks in the fields near Bethlehem. The angel told them the good news of the birth of the Savior and Messiah, Jesus Christ. The shepherds immediately went to find baby Jesus, whom the angels told them they would find sleeping in the manger.

**Luke 2:8-20**

*<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has*

*happened, which the Lord has told us about.”<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.<sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,<sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.<sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.<sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

### **SONG: Hark! The Harold Angels Sing**

After some time, wise men, also known as magi, saw the brilliant light of a star in the sky that rested over where Jesus was born. The wise men traveled from a distant eastern country to find the newborn King of the Jews. During the wise men’s trip they stopped in Jerusalem to ask the current King, Herod, where they could locate this newborn King. Feeling threatened by a new king, Herod consulted counselors and determined Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Herod sent the wise men on their journey and asked to be informed when they located this new king, so pretentiously he could come and worship him. The wise men continue to Bethlehem being guided by the same light of the star that had appeared at the beginning. There they found the child Jesus and they knelt and worshipped Him and presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then being warned by an angel they left for their home using a different route avoiding Jerusalem.

### **Matthew 2:1-12**

*<sup>1</sup>After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: <sup>6</sup> ““But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

### **SONG: Because of Bethlehem**

THE WORLD CELEBRATED THAT CHRISTMAS HAS COME!

## **JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: Jesus Candle**

**Mike Teel, Pastor**

John describes Jesus as the “Light of the World”. John’s description of Jesus as light is particularly significant, as John was Jesus’ best friend. John was unique among the disciples as he was the only one present when Jesus died. He also saw Jesus for who he was, and thus, he likely understood Jesus’ role in the world as Messiah better than others in biblical times.

### **John 1:1-5**

*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

### **John 1:14**

*<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

On two other occasions as John is describing Jesus public earthly ministry, he records Jesus own admission that Jesus is the Light of the world. Once when He had administered forgiveness to the lady caught in adultery.

### **John 8:2-12**

*<sup>2</sup> At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” <sup>6</sup> They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup> “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” <sup>12</sup> When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

The second time in John’s gospel He is healing a man who had been blind from birth. The disciples wanted to know who had sinned him or his parents!

### **John 9:1-7**

*<sup>1</sup> As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” <sup>3</sup> “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” <sup>6</sup> After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. <sup>7</sup> “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.*

Unfortunately we are all guilty of either being **unfaithful** to God or being **blind** to the Light of Salvation and forgiveness in our lives.

Perhaps the best way to understand what Jesus meant by "I am the light of the world" is to picture a ship in a tumultuous sea at night. Though the ship can't see what's ahead of it, it follows the lighthouse's light toward its home on the shore.

Our relationship with Jesus is very similar.

We can't see our future, direction, or destination, but Jesus can. Like the lighthouse guided the ship, Jesus directs us toward God's light. The light of Christ guides us through the darkness of sin, life, and struggle both spiritually and literally.

We can also understand the meaning of "I am the light of the world" by looking at John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Like the other verses in John's gospel, this verse conveys the idea that anyone who follows Jesus and accepts him as life and light will live eternally in heaven after they die. Like bread, Jesus' light also sustains you and allows you to push on.

Are you aimlessly drifting around in the darkness of this world?  
Have you been guilty of not being faithful to God?

### **LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**

I want to challenge those of you who have the light of Jesus in your life to share it in 2026! Our theme for 2026 is taken from **Matthew 5:16** **"Let your light shine!"** Jesus said of the light . . . Not only is He the light of the World but . . .

#### **Matthew 5:14-16**

<sup>14</sup> ***"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

We are to let our lights shine. It begins with one light and as we share it with others it overcomes and conquers the darkness. The light is not ours but received from the light of this world. And it all began on that Silent Night so long ago!

#### **SONG: Silent Night**

Notice how the light grows brighter the more the light was passed among us! This will be true in our community as we share Christ in 2026.

#### **SONG: Go Tell It On The Mountain / Joy To The World**

**Merry Christmas to all!**