

Church of St. John the Evangelist, Elora  
Christmas Day  
December 25, 2021  
Canon Paul Walker

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.*

It may seem that a second Christmas during a pandemic feels like living in a land of deep darkness. But what we are living in is pale in comparison to what Isaiah's people were living in; not to mention what Mary and Joseph and the shepherds were living in. They were dark days of fear and uncertainty.

We are told that the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night. It was dark.

We are told that this all happened when Augustus was the Emperor, and Quirinius was the governor. Imperial decrees, mandated registrations, restricted travel, infant genocide, refugees. It was very dark.

In the midst of this deep darkness an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and the glory of

the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. One angel is joined by an army of angels who began to glorify God. It's a moment, a glimpse of heaven coming down to earth, in this darkness, and breaking in with a new light.

Their message would change the world. A Saviour was born, who would be the Prince of Peace, and this Saviour's kingdom would be established for ever.

So the shepherds go with haste to Bethlehem, and like the the disciples who go with haste to the empty tomb, what they saw were things just as it had been told them. The shepherds saw a babe wrapped in bands of cloth - and that was the sign, just as it had been told them. The disciples in the empty tomb saw the linen wrappings lying - one at the head, the other at the foot - and that was the sign, just as it had been told them.

Those two signs were sufficient enough for the shepherds, and ample enough for the disciples to understand that a light has finally shined in this dark world; and that light was Jesus Christ.

The shepherd's fear turned to joy, just as the disciples fear would turn to joy, because what they saw and heard was true. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

The shepherds saw it, the Magi saw it, the disciples saw it, and we now, even though we have not seen it, we have heard it.

So for every generation, whether we live in a pandemic, or a famine, or an oppressive empire, there are always good reasons to fear much.

But remember what we have been told. We were told about the shepherds who saw a babe wrapped in bands of cloth. We were told about the feeding of the multitude. We were told about the cleansing of the leper, the healing of the blind, the calming of the storm, and the raising of the dead. We were told about Mary Magdalene, Peter, James and John who saw the linen wrappings lying in the empty tomb. We were told it was true that a light has dawned because *they saw it*, and they told us.

So like Mary, ponder these things, treasure these things in your heart, because what we are told in

the texts, carols, and prayers of the Christmas season are intended to be sufficient enough to get us through any great tragedy or global pandemic. Just when you think things are at the worst, remember what you have been told.

*I bring you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.*

Therein lies our light and our hope.



The Church of St. John the Evangelist  
36 Henderson Street,  
Elora, ON, N0B 1S0  
519-846-5911  
[www.stjohnselora.ca](http://www.stjohnselora.ca)