

The background image is a dramatic landscape. In the foreground, a simple wooden structure, possibly a boat or a small shelter, is built on a rocky shore. The structure is made of dark wood and has some dry sticks or straw on top. The sky is a mix of dark blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. A bright light source is visible in the upper left, creating a lens flare effect. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

A light IN THE **DARKNESS**

Lessons and Carols

Lessons with Introductions

LESSON ONE – Lector:

In the beginning, God created light. Listening to the lies of the devil, mankind created the spiritual darkness known as sin. A reading from the book of Genesis, chapters 1 and 3:

^{1:1}In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.”

²⁶God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

^{3:1}Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

This is the Word of the Lord.

LESSON TWO – Lector:

Jesus Christ is the light that has come into the world, bringing God's forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe. A reading from the Gospel of St. John, chapter 3:

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

LESSON THREE – Lector:

Judgment Day is coming, and it will be a day of darkness and gloom for all those who are not prepared. The Lord of love begs us to return to him, repenting of our sin. A reading from the book of Joel, chapter 2:

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is close at hand— ²a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. ³Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. ¹⁰Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. ¹¹The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?

¹²“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” ¹³Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

This is the Word of the Lord.

LESSON FOUR – Lector:

We are encouraged to walk in the light of God's love and forgiveness. A reading from the epistle of First John, chapter 1:

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

This is the Word of the Lord.

LESSON FIVE – Lector:

We read Psalm 27 responsively.

M: The LORD is my light and my salvation —whom shall I fear?

C: The LORD is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?

M: Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;

C: though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

M: One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek:

C: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,

M: to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD

C: and to seek him in his temple.

M: For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;

C: he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.

M: Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;

C: be merciful to me and answer me.

M: Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper.

C: Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior.

M: Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

C: I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

M: Wait for the LORD;

C: be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

LESSON SIX – Pastor (sermon lesson)

A reading from the book of Isaiah, chapter 9:

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Salutation

Sermon

LESSON SEVEN – Lector:

The birth of Jesus Christ. A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 2:

² In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ 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. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ 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.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ 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.”

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

This is the Gospel of our Lord.