

The Rev. Thomas M. Murphy
St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, Owings Mills MD
December 24, 2022

Christmas Eve (5PM)

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalm 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

Shining Jesus' Warm Light of Love Into Our Cold World

Merry Christmas, Everyone!

You know, one of the great joys of being the rector of St. Thomas' is that there are so many people – generous and talented parishioners along with our hardworking and devoted staff – so many people who put in so much time and effort and talent to make things happen here, week after week.

And, as you would guess and can surely tell, these people have been in overdrive during the past couple of weeks, and especially the last few days – making it well worth our while to brave arctic temperatures to be here tonight.

They've been using their talent, creativity, and even employing some daredevil-like feats to decorate our church so spectacularly (I mean, come on, look at this place!).

They've been rehearsing all of the beautiful Christmas music that we love so much.

They've been creating, copying, and folding a mountain of bulletins.

They've been making sure that the children who are about to offer us their "Christmas Tableau" are ready play their important part in our service.

It's been just amazing.

Thanks to all of this hard work, I have no doubt that we are making some wonderful memories here today.

Having said that, I'm pretty sure that what I will remember most about this particular Christmas is...just how cold it's been!

I can't remember the last time I was this cold!

Lots of us lost power yesterday, some for a short while and some for, well, a longer time.

So, a couple of things about such a cold Christmas.

First, such bitter cold can help us feel closer to the people who endure the cold all the time: people who have to work outside and people who don't have homes of their own.

This year, I think especially of the brave Ukrainian people enduring the cold and so much suffering.

Which brings me to my second point.

No matter the temperature, the world can be a cold place.

People are often not as kind or as generous or as loving as they could be, as we should be.

So, I don't know what the temperature was when Mary and Joseph made the long trip to Bethlehem, but how cold it was that this couple expecting the birth of Jesus had to travel so far from home, all because the government wanted to count heads.

I don't know what the temperature was on the first Christmas, but how cold it was that no one offered Mary and Joseph a clean and comfortable place for

themselves and for the newborn Jesus, forcing them to stay in a place meant for animals.

But, from the start, from the first Christmas, Jesus will shine the warm light of love into a cold world, always especially loving the people who were poor like the shepherds – loving the people who were lonely and frightened, the people that most other people didn't like at all.

And Jesus still shines the warm light of love into our cold world – shines that warm light through us each time we give away something that we really like and value, each time we're kind to people we don't know, people who are different from us or even people we don't like.

Jesus still shines the warm light of love into our cold world, in and through us, on Christmas Eve and all the time.

So, yes, it is cold out there – it's really cold.

But, thanks to lots of hard work by some incredible people it's so warm in here – do you feel how warm it is?

And so the best Christmas gift we can give is to shine Jesus' warm light of love into our cold world.

Merry Christmas to you all.

Amen.