

GRANT COUNTY JAIL SERVICE

Good evening. I'm Pastor Paul, and this is Pastor Kiva. We're honored to be with you. Tonight is a space of respect. No one has to speak. No one has to sing. You can just listen. We won't ask you to stand up or look around. Tonight isn't about performance. It's about presence.

What is Christmas....? Here's the heart of what we believe about Christmas:

“Christmas is not God coming to the people who have it together—Christmas is God coming to people who don't.”

That means Christmas is for real people... in real places... with real stories.

OPENER

Paul: I want to teach one verse tonight. It's a simple one. I'll say the first part, and you all say the second part.

Paul: *“The Light shines in the darkness...”*

All: *“...and the darkness has not overcome it.”* (John 1:5)

Paul: Again (*and again until they get it right* 😊)

Paul: *“The Light shines in the darkness...”*

All: *“...and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

P: Let's pray. Jesus, be near to us tonight. Amen.

WORSHIP SET INTRODUCTION

Kiva: We're going to sing a Christmas carol. You're welcome to sing along if you want or just listen.

- **O Come, O Come Emmanuel.**

SCRIPTURE READING 1 (JOHN'S CHRISTMAS)

Paul: Now we're going to hear where that verse I taught you comes from, the Gospel of John, where Christmas is described as Light coming into darkness.

Kiva: Read **John 1:1–5, 9–14** (NIV)

(*After the reading, Kiva says, “This is the Word of the Lord.” Paul replies, “Thanks be to God.”*)

Paul: I want to teach one more thing: when a person finishes reading scripture, it is customary to say, “This is the Word of the Lord.” And y'all reply: “Thanks be to God.”

All: Thanks be to God.

Paul (refrain once):

The Light shines in the darkness...

All: *and the darkness has not overcome it.*

A SHORT HOMILY

(Theme: “God comes to the locked places.”)

Paul: John doesn’t begin Christmas with a manger. He begins with a sentence that can hold you up when life is heavy:

“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

And here’s what that means tonight:

God comes *toward* people who don’t have it together... Hear that?

God comes toward people who don’t have it together: Not the polished. Not the impressive. Not the “already fixed” kind of people.

Christmas is God moving toward the ones who feel stuck, tired, ashamed, afraid, or forgotten.

Jesus was born with:

- **no room,**
- **no control,**
- **no comfort,**

and still, God came to us...

The first Christmas was not “peaceful and perfect.” It happened under pressure.

And guess what: God is not waiting for your life to be perfect to come near.

Some people think, “If I can just get my act together, then God will show up.”

Christmas says the opposite: **GOD SHOWS UP FIRST.**

God comes into the real conditions of your life... not the ideal version.

God is not waiting for your life to be perfect to come near.

A simple prayer works: “Jesus, come near.”

Paul (short invitation): If you want, you can pray during our next song—no one needs to know but you and God.

WORSHIP RESPONSE SET 2

Kiva: Let's take this moment to sing a very special Christmas carol. You're welcome to sing along if you want or listen.

- **Silent Night**

SCRIPTURE READING 2 (LUKE'S ANNOUNCEMENT):

Paul: Now let's hear Luke's story—notice who gets the announcement first—ordinary people on an ordinary night.

Kiva: Reading **Luke 2:1–7** (birth) and **Luke 2:8–14** (angels)

Kiva: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Paul: (refrain once):

The Light shines in the darkness...

All: ...and the darkness has not overcome it.

Paul: So when we repeat: "*The Light shines in the darkness...*"

We're not talking about denial. We're talking about defiance.

The Darkness is real... but it doesn't get the last word.

WORSHIP RESPONSE SET 2

Kiva: This next Christmas Carol is a classic.

- **Away in a Manger**

INVITATION

Kiva: If you want to pray tonight, you don't need fancy words.

Just one sentence: "**Jesus, Light of the world, come near to me.**"

GUIDED PRAYER

Paul: I'm going to guide us in prayer. No one has to speak out loud.

If you want, hold these four things quietly in your heart:

- one **name** (someone you love),
- one **regret** (something you carry),
- one **fear** (something that keeps you up inside),
- one **hope** (even if it feels small).

(Pausing 5–10 seconds; when I start remember: slow, short lines + space):

- **God of mercy...** *(pause)* meet us here.
- **God of peace...** *(pause)* guard our minds.
- **God of hope...** *(pause)* give us courage.
- **God of love...** *(pause)* remind us we are not forgotten.
- **Jesus...** *(pause)* let Your Light shine in our darkness. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Kiva:

May the peace of Christ be with you here.

May you know you are not forgotten.

May the Light of Jesus guard your heart and mind—today and every day. Amen.

(Final refrain)

Kiva: The Light shines in the darkness...

All: ...and the darkness has not overcome it.