

A dramatic sky with dark, heavy clouds and bright light breaking through, creating rays of light. The word "LIGHT!" is written in white, bold, serif capital letters across the center of the image.

LIGHT!

17 January, 2021

“In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light **shines** in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.”

Gospel of John 1:4-5

Continuing the theme of “light” we celebrated over Christmas

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a Great Light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has Light shined.*

Isaiah 9:2

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How soon half the month of January has gone! We continue to “battle” with a virus which has gained new notoriety, of becoming highly transmittable.

The roll-out of vaccines brings hope, but not everyone embraces the hope for life, preferring instead to remain in limbo, treading water, not deciding whether to sink or swim.

We are gathered this morning by the One in whom Hope is personified and made real, the One who has restored our relationship with the Author of Hope, God our Father to whom we offer our unabated worship this morning!

Welcome to worship! Let’s join the company of Angels in Heaven praying, “*let it be on earth, exactly as it is happening in Heaven*”!

LISTEN There is none like You

Let’s begin with PRAYER

Most Holy God! There is none Holy as You! Your Word is Light, Your Light is Life and Your Life is Eternal. You made us in Your image to live Your Holiness in our world, but we have become entangled in the tension that darkness provokes with Light, the shadow of death that creates an active hostility with the achieved hope of Resurrection.

Forgive us for not believing with all our heart, mind and soul, you illuminated the universe by calling out “Light”; You filled the void with Life by speaking Your purpose for the world and bringing it into being.

Commute my death sentence God, my salvation God, and I’ll sing anthems to Your life-giving ways. Unbutton my lips, dear God; I’ll let loose with Your praise.¹

God of Heaven and Master of our lives; may our worship of You now bridge Heaven and earth, drawing our feeble voices into the chorus of praise that rings through the universe. In the Name of Jesus our Christ whose kingdom we await! **AMEN.**

HYMN Open my eyes that I may see

¹ Psalm 51:15 (The Message)

READING **Gospel of John, 1:4-5** (J.B. Philips Translation)

“In Him appeared Life, and this Life was the Light of mankind. The Light still shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out.”

HYMN **He Lives! He Lives!**

PRAYER of CONFESSION, INTERCESSION and RESTITUTION

Yes Lord! Jesus Christ Lives! Today and every day! Yet Father, why is our world cloaked with darkness and soaked with coldness? Indifference, apathy and self-centredness has destroyed cherished and valued relationships, and people are living lives in spiritual darkness without You.

Loving Father! I have failed those around me by not being the light which reflects Your Glory and the Glory of Jesus my Christ. Caught up in daily chores and the trials of life, forgive me for not seeking You first, making time to indulge in, and bask in Your Word, and committing myself to prayer and worship.

Let me hear the sound of joy and gladness, so that the bones You allowed to be crushed can rejoice. Create in me a clean heart, God; renew in me a resolute spirit. Restore my joy in Your salvation, and let a willing spirit uphold me.²

Father! I want to be your agent in the world around me, especially to those looking for light to live by, and relationships they can trust.

Use me to bring hope to those in anguish;

Use me to reach out to family, friends and neighbours, showing them how You have removed the oppressive things, and given me courage when I lived in fear, that you WILL do the same for them, if only they live in surrender to You

May I continue to reflect your light in my life, in my service, in my words and in my deeds, Christ reflects Your Life, Your Light and Your Love. **AMEN.**

HYMN **Return to me and I will be Your God!**

² Psalm 51 (CJB)

MESSAGE:

We are carrying over from Christmas, the theme of LIGHT. Most of us live by the division of night and day and we have learned to balance life between darkness and light.

There are times I *think* I know more about darkness than I do about light!

Darkness deprives me of sight. As I cannot see, I bump into and stumble over things I did not know, or had forgotten were there. On occasion, I have hurt and injured myself, even when walking with extreme caution in the darkness. The darkness has also tricked me: I have walked in a direction I found out was not where I wanted to go, and reached out for things that were not where they should have been. As a child, darkness stirred my imagination of horrible things lurking in a deep abyss waiting to harm me; darkness leaves me with feelings of trepidation, anxiety, worry, nervousness and dread; not very good feelings!

The start of the Gospel of John reminds me of the author James Michener, many of whose books started with a creation account of the place he was writing about.³ John does the same. The first three words of his Gospel account are exactly the same as the first three words in the Bible, *In the beginning...* Whereas the author of Genesis puts a marker on the beginning of time, John refers to “before time was created by God”: *In the beginning, the Word already existed!* He then makes a statement that has over millennia, confused everyone alike, but which was very clear in his mind, *The Word was with God and the Word was God.* “The Word” (referring to Christ) existed in two dimensions - **with** God and **was** God, distinguishable from God, yet identical with God. In John’s mind this is not a mystery. It is, who Christ is!

In one sentence, John affirms the **existence** of The Word from before ‘the beginning’, establishes the **relationship** of The Word with God, and declares the **character**/nature of The Word to be the same as that of God! A Jewish

³ Hawaii, Caravans, Chesapeake, Centennial, Alaska, Texas, Caribbean, The Drifters and many more!

scholar says, "It might be better translated as, "*The Word was face to face with God.*" The relationship of Jesus and God was more than side-by-side; it was a face-to-face relationship indicating far more intimacy than that of simply being co-workers."⁴

John wants emphasise the relationship between the Creator and Christ by affirming that nothing was made apart from Christ; His imprint is stamped over all creation. Modern science tries to describe the mystery and meaning of life in physical and chemical terms through DNA studies, but each of us is responsible for the life we live, to God our Creator and Life-Giver, and to Christ who with our permission transforms us into His likeness, to be readily identifiable as a member of God's family.

John then explains that 'Life' and 'Light' belong together. The 'Life' that is God and also Christ (which is ***eternal***) is the same as 'Light' which cannot be extinguished by darkness. In the first creation, *'darkness was upon the face of the deep'*⁵ until God called Light to uncover and expose the darkness, so the new creation in Christ (The Word) shines Light which uncovers and exposes spiritual darkness.

The wisdom of the world cannot define and make sense of Life for us. It is like driving in total darkness, listening to other drivers giving directions who are also driving in total darkness!

To sum up, not only did The Word give Life to everything that was created, His (Christ's) LIFE brought LIGHT to everyone⁶, spiritual and natural light. We can, and many do exist without Christ. John describes an ongoing battle as darkness is always trying to extinguish The Light, but it is a losing battle. The Light that SHINES in the darkness is the light darkness can never be extinguished.

⁴ Roger Hahn in "The Voice"

⁵ Genesis 1:2

⁶ John 1:4 (NLT)

Thanks to Benjamin Franklin who made it easy for us by flicking a switch, and hey presto - light! We have taken light for granted, but we have a conscious decision to make: we don't need to spend time trying to live in darkness, not make the effort to understand it, its terror, its unknown character, its evil-cloaking nature.

John says it so clearly, the darkness is trying to extinguish The Light believing it can, but not understanding it cannot!

The Light, Jesus our Christ invites us into a relationship, the result of which is that His Life in us will shine in the darkness of the world around us.

In the same way as John the Baptist was not himself The Light, he was simply a witness who spoke to others about The Light, so too are we invited to be a witness of The Life to whom we are surrendered, whose Light shines through us into the world in which we live. It is a conscious decision on our part to choose to live in obedience to Him Who was before the beginning, and to whom belongs, eternity-after-time.

Which side of the battle would you align yourself: the darkness which is trying every trick in the book to extinguish The Light, thinking it can, never realising it cannot, or The Light which is eternal, the source of which is Life that is eternal? **AMEN.**

LISTEN Let my Light Shine for Jesus

PRAYER

Loving Father! You speak in unexpected places, and with unexpected voices. We aren't always sure how to listen, we aren't always sure whom we are hearing because we aren't always sure if we're really hearing You. Forgive us for not spending more time with You, to know you more and to recognise Your voice. Please be blunt with us Father, be clear so that we have no doubt it is Your voice we hear. In Jesus' Name, this we ask. **AMEN.**

HYMN Becasue HE Lives, I can face tomorrow!

BLESSING

Our Loving Father! We look to You, longing for the fulfilment of Your Word in the work of the Holy Spirit, and the soon coming reign of Christ.

As we leave this space of worship, knowing so much of the road ahead is uncertain, the path constantly changing, we know the things that are as solid and sure as the ground beneath our feet and the sky above our heads.

We know Your love is real and to be cherished.

We know Christ's Light endures; He too is eternal.

We know the Holy Spirit this here with us, binding us to each other, and drawing us together into Your work on earth.

Until we meet we again to worship You Eternal God, release us to go in peace and serve You. **AMEN**

LISTEN This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!

Be blessed and be a blessing, in the Name of Christ, for the Glory of God!

Have a great week!