



24 January, 2021

*Father! Let Your Word
be a lamp to my feet
showing me the direction I should walk
the path which draws me closer to You
to enjoy the Light which gives
Real Life.*

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Welcome to worship on another Sunday in lockdown!
Don't let lockdown pull your spirits down!
We are here to worship God
who has gathered us from everywhere
to this time and space

Today we conclude our exploration of LIGHT which 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
Next week we continue studying the Gospel of John.

Let's begin with a time of SILENCE followed by PRAYER

LISTEN Be Still my Soul

PRAYER

In Your presence, my Loving Father, I find peace, comfort and shelter from the storm caused by a virus, and by the darkness that stirs people to say and do things that are dishonouring to You. In You I place my trust, my complete trust.

Quiet my soul to wait in silence; all my hope rests in God, my rock, my refuge and my salvation. During this time of worship, as I open my heart to You my Lord, I will not be shaken nor will I be distracted, because I trust in Your steadfast love that has gripped me. **AMEN**

SING Great is Thy Faithfulness

READING

Psalm 119

Aleph

- 1 Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord.
- 2 Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.
- 3 They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths.
- 4 You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully.
- 5 Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees!
- 6 Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with your commands.
- 7 As I learn your righteous regulations, I will thank you by living as I should!
- 8 I will obey your decrees. Please don't give up on me!

Gimel

- 17 Be good to your servant, that I may live and obey your word.
- 18 Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions.

Lamedh

- 89 Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven.
- 90 Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created.
- 91 Your regulations remain true to this day, for everything serves your plans.
- 92 If your instructions hadn't sustained me with joy, I would have died in my misery.
- 93 I will never forget your commandments, for by them you give me life.

Nun

- 105 Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.
- 106 I've promised it once, and I'll promise it again: I will obey your righteous regulations.
- 107 I have suffered much, O Lord; restore my life again as you promised.
- 108 Lord, accept my offering of praise, and teach me your regulations.
- 111 Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart's delight.
- 112 I am determined to keep your decrees to the very end.

AMEN

SING **I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene**

MESSAGE

This month we have been continuing on from Christmas on the theme of Light having come in our midst. We started by examining the Light which **Reflects** what is in our hearts, then the Light which **Shines**, an eternal Light which shines through us as a witness of the steadfastness of God.

Today we examine the last in this series, the **Light which gives Life.**

Let's start where we started in early January. John writes, "What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness could not put it out. " (John 1:4-5).

Every gardener will agree, water and sunlight are two essential ingredients for plants to grow. God has planted this Truth all around us, and we have two special seasons, "seed-time (spring) and harvest"¹ to celebrate this! The Truth is this, Life is dependent on Light.

John starts his Gospel message, linking the arrival of Jesus on earth, with the presence of Jesus at creation. Jesus has not been absent between creation and His arrival on earth; He has been present with God, working with God for the fulfilment of God's Kingdom, preparing for the task of coming among us.

In the beginning, God moved towards the darkness and spoke one word: "Light!". In uttering this word, God announced His presence. He drew a line and darkness was contained behind that line. The rest of creation progressed, because the presence of "Light!" made it possible.

The short period of Jesus' intense teaching was to invite people to crossover the line, from darkness into Light and show them, it was worth their while, to do so.

Those who study the wars fought in history end up asking the same question, generation after generation, "*What happened that resulted in so many human lives*

¹ Genesis 8:22

lost?” The same question is being asked about the year 2020, “What happened? How did we end up losing so many lives, first to a virus, then to a social ideology?

2020 started with a threat of an unknown and unquantifiable coronavirus creating devastating damage, and ended with hope by the announcement of two market-ready vaccines.

One line of reporting which ran concurrent with the unrelenting news about coronavirus, was that of the racial divide which runs through society all over the world, highlighted by the death of George Floyd in America.

News headlines move and grip us in different ways. Whether such news items have stun you into apathy, going about your work like zombies, masking feelings and emotions, or being overwhelmed by sadness, leading to discouragement, your response demonstrates the light-less, dark world, in which we humans struggles to find life, because there is no light!

We fool ourselves into believing we are **enlight**ened, that ours us an age of **enlight**enment, that knowledge today surpasses the knowledge of all our preceding generations. We fail to acknowledge that the oral tradition of memorising words accurately, transmitted history; that invention of the wheel in what we call a “pre-historic age” was the foundation of all transport and machinery; that the invention (or discovery perhaps) of “zero” and “infinity” formed the foundation of all calculations which contributed to the science of astronomy, and more recently, the computer.

This snobbery which puts down our human ancestors who contributed to our present leads to an elitism, an attitude of patronising superiority, that we do not repeat the mistakes our ancestors made. We say we won’t allow the pogrom of people of Jewish ancestry to take place, we won’t allow slavery, yet we have since turned a blind eye to similar pogroms and various forms of slavery across the world in the last 70 years .

Without belabouring the point, we the human race keep trying to extricate ourselves from the mistakes of the past, but falling back into the same horrible

practices in a different guise and form. It is a darkness that will not go away, even when our good intentions tries to shine a light on it.

The prophet Isaiah's theme is a call to *walk in the light of the Lord*. He makes three strong statements about spiritual light and darkness, including a prophecy about Jesus.

1. **Woe to those who darken the light.** *"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness".² Spiritual darkness is making honourable what God sees as abominable; evil approved as good. Paul tells the Church in Rome, people who suppress Truth by their wickedness, "not only do such things, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them".³*
2. **God's law gives light** *"Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict His word are completely in the dark".⁴ People who have not experienced sunrise in their soul, can find enlightenment through only one source, the law and the testimony of God. God's new covenant came to us through Jesus, the light of mankind bringing grace and truth.⁵*
3. **The Light Shines on Everyone** *"... on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness shall see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them".⁶ Galilee where the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun had settled, was one of the first to be conquered and captured by the King of Assyria.⁷ The real "yoke" and "oppressor" of these people⁸ was not an invading foreign nation. Their yoke was sin, their real oppressor was Satan. The spiritual forces of darkness⁹ had long been at*

² Isaiah 5:20

³ Romans 1:29-32

⁴ Isaiah 8:20

⁵ John 1:4-5, John 1:17-18

⁶ Isaiah 9:1-2

⁷ 2Kings 15:29

⁸ Isaiah 9:4

⁹ Ephesians 6:12

work spreading ignorance, idolatry, and confusion¹⁰, and still doing so today the world over.¹¹

As the boundary of light continues to push darkness into a fast receding corner, the battle becomes more intense. Our world is cloaked in darkness. Paul told the Church in Corinth, *"The god of this world has blinded the eyes" of so many people, yet for those who wish to see, "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God", shall illumine them. He has "shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"*.¹²

The daily news affects our well-being. We cannot live the life God intended for us, when all we hear is distressing news of doom and gloom, constantly reminding us, we live in a fallen and dark world. We all are people blinded by the darkness, desperately searching for life, real life.

If we are ever to find joy in life and in living, our starting point would be accept Jesus' self disclosure, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*¹³ This is an invitation we cannot afford to ignore. Life needs Light, and the only reliable Light is, *"the Word who already existed, was with God, and was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone."*¹⁴

Will you ignore or accept the invitation follow the Light of the World and enjoy the blessing of the Light of Life, the real life?

AMEN

Lets' close with a prayer based on Psalm 119:105

¹⁰ Isaiah 9:16

¹¹ 1John 5:19-20

¹² 2Corinthians 4:4-6

¹³ John 8:12

¹⁴ John 1:1-4

PRAYER

Loving Father! The world around me seems to falling apart, threatening to take me with it. I am in desperate need of being put back together. Only Your Word can do it Father. You sent Your Son to be Light in a world cloaked in darkness, where traps are set for me, to make me trip and fall, and stop me from running away and embracing Light. In the darkness where confusion reigns, where wrong masquerades as right, lies are peddled as Truth, corruption and dishonesty are an accepted way of life, please let Your Word, my Christ shine a beam of light to illuminate my path, that I may see where I am going. I've committed myself to follow You and I will never turn back from living by Your Righteous order. Thank you Loving Father that Your Son my Christ *came that I and everyone who follows Him, can enjoy real life, life which is eternal, beyond the constraints of time and space, and get more out of this Real Life, a life better than anyone ever dreamed of.*¹⁵ In the Name of the One who **IS** the Light of the World! **AMEN**

LISTEN **When I think about the Lord**

BENEDICTION

WOW! How blessed are you who has chosen to walk in the light of God's countenance! Go live your life and prepare for day which is coming soon when, *"No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. ...* Blessed are you who has chosen to walk in the Light of God's countenance. **AMEN**

SING as you make coffee, Shine! Jesus Shine!

*Go into your world, blessed by God who loves you,
and be a blessing to all whom God loves!*

¹⁵ John 10:10