

In the creation story, at the very beginning of scripture, in the first 3 verses; we read about darkness and how God created the light.  
He created light before He created the sun and moon.

Isaiah was a prophet during the time when the original nation of Israel was divided into 2 kingdoms.

He was called to prophesy of the great Deliverer, Who would save His people from their sins.

At that time, the people of Israel were walking in darkness, that means worshipping idols, oppressing the poor and perverting justice.

But Isaiah spoke of a coming Messiah, Who not only would bring the light with him, but would be the Light of lights. He would be the Light of the world to the people who walked in darkness. A light so brilliant it was to embrace every man, woman and child, born into this world.

This wonderful, traditional advent reading from Isaiah foretells of Jesus' birth. The Messiah. Emmanuel, God with us.

It is scripture full of hope for the future and excitement.

Promising light at the end of the tunnel of gloom and despair. Slaves will be liberated, the oppressor banished. There will be a new order of peace and justice.

And there is darkness in our world..ignorance and calamity:- war, domestic abuse, murder, people trafficking, injustice and our own personal disappointments.

Isaiah reminded Gods people that God was angry at injustice, appalled that no one cared enough to intervene.

God cared and sent His son. Born in darkness and brought the light.

And He cares about the minutiae of our lives. Our wounds and personal darkness.

Scripture tells us that we too walk in the darkness when our life is apart from Jesus.

We try and live in our own strength, and fail miserably.

Jesus is the light that shines within the darkness of the world around us and within our own lives.

Jesus' birth brings light that chases away the shadows; the fear; the blindness.

He brings hope.

He is the Light of the world, which we celebrate at Christingle.

He illuminates the truth of the world so we do not remain captive to our old ways. But can be transformed by Jesus through forgiveness, compassion, joy, peace.

He is the light through which Gods Kingdom comes.

And as we re read all the Christmas passages we can pray that like the shepherds who were in complete darkness one minute, then, the field was suddenly filled with glorious light, we can also experience the brilliant explosion of light in the darkness that surrounds us and

tries to creep up on us. We are Gods children and He has marked us as His own. We are saved.

**But, how do we keep on hoping when our lives are in turmoil.  
When the tears don't stop and the pain is persistent.??**

So, how do we hold onto our faith in our Almighty God?

When times are tough I hold onto certain scriptures that remind me how faithful God is. I rely on friends and family who remind me of past answers to prayer.

I ask for prayer. I pray with others.

And I praise! Yes. Praise. Even when it feels like there is nothing to be thankful for.

God is worthy of our praise. In praising we involve our whole selves in hoping in our Creator God.

And praise in the darkness is the most astonishing gift to God.

None of this is easy. It is an act of will and of course trust in a God who is in charge and who never lets us go.

Writing this talk has been a challenge. How do I describe Hope?

It is an elusive concept or quality. What God has done and what he is doing.

This gives us hope for what He will be doing.

Hope is not specific outcomes it is WHO not WHAT

I have prayed with some of you, and we know what we are praying for...hoping for.

We are praying for an outcome. An answer. Somehow we have to divert our attention to **who** we are hoping in.

Whilst discussing this with Jon, he reminded me of that famous quote from Julian of Norwich..'all will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.'

She wrote this in the darkest of times. The country was going to pot. Lives were in danger.

And yet, she had these words given to her from the Holy Spirit.

They are words of Hope as well as comfort.

Our hope is in Him

John 1 v5 tells us that the light of Jesus cannot be overcome by anything.

No spiritual powers or cultural events can overcome this light.

And nothing that anyone can do can separate us from the love and light of God.

We started at the beginning, with creation.

As I close, let's hold onto the hope in this verse from Revelation.

Revelation 21 v23,24..'The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light'

Let's pray..

Lord may your true Light shine in areas of our lives where the shadows are creeping in.

May we embrace the dawn of hope that knowing you brings. And may we trust in you through all situations. Amen

*Gillian Robinson*