



CHRISTMAS
LIGHTS

Day 1

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:5

As I begin writing this, I am in the middle of putting my Christmas decorations up! Now, by the time you will be reading this that may seem perfectly acceptable, only it's still November as I write which in my mind crosses the normal way of doing things! I would only ever put up my Christmas decorations once December came, however this is not a normal year so I think we can get away with it! There is something amazing about Christmas lights that seems to bring excitement and happiness to most people (unless you are some kind of Christmas grinch!) As I sit in my living room looking at the lights it brings a kind of warmth that makes me feel different to what I felt before. There is something quite powerful about light. The scripture written above is in the very first chapter of the gospel of Luke and is one of the earlier verses. I began reading through look a few weeks ago and what stood out to me over and over what the constant mentions of the word 'light.' Right from the get-go of this book light is clearly important because in the first 9 chapters alone the word is mentioned 7 times. This particularly verse looks fairly obvious – of course when there is light in a dark place, light always wins. We know what it is to put a torch on in a dark room...there is no way darkness can overtake light. Light always wins. Sometimes in life, all can appear quite dark. This makes me think of the Christmas carol that begins, 'in the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan...' It all does seem quite bleak. As we come to the final month of 2020 there could be a tendency to want to forget this 'bleak' year, but the reality is no matter how bleak and dark things have got, for so many there is always light shining through! There is always goodness in the midst of bad times. There are always Christmas lights to bring us joy. More importantly Jesus is still a very bright light who can bring joy to our lives despite the darkness we are feeling or facing.

Can I encourage you today to turn your face toward the light of Jesus? Why not offer up this year to Him, whatever your year has been like and ask his light to fill your life today.

Day 2

'One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see.' John 9:25

John Newton wrote the famous hymn, 'Amazing Grace' which had the line 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.' His story was one of darkness that turned to light. He had been the captain of a slave ship and part of that very dark part of English history, but he had a 'darkness to light' moment when he converted to Christianity. The words of the famous hymn that he wrote capture the change that took place in his life. One of the lines of his hymn closely resemble the verse above from John 9. In this story in the gospel of John we see a man who was physically blind but on this particular day Jesus came along and healed him and he was able to see. People of the time who were not particularly pro-Jesus started questioning him about what had happened to him. How did he go from being blind to being able to see. I love the verse above because it makes the story so simple in many ways. One moment he was blind, the next he could see, and it was all because of Jesus.

There are many people in our world today that live in spiritual blindness. There is a darkness about them because they have not yet experienced the light of Jesus. The switch for my bedroom light has not worked for months now. I have other lights in my room so in some ways it doesn't seem to be too big a problem until I try to look in my wardrobe. The main light helped me to see everything clearly not just certain parts of my room. If I want to really have clarity, I need to get that light back on!

Maybe today you are reading this, and you need the light that Jesus brings into your life. You can ask him into your life wherever you are reading this today and you too will be able to say, 'I was blind but now I see.' The amazing thing about Jesus is once we invite Him into our lives, his light pushes out the darkness because He is light! Maybe there are areas of your life that feel quite dark – invite Jesus in and he can bring his light to help you today.

Day 3

'Believe in the light while you have the light so that you may become children of the light.' John 12:36

A few weeks ago, the neighbours of my sister and brother-in-law put up their Christmas lights. They live in Wales so I can't obviously be with them right now but a few times a week I will facetime them to see both them and to see my nephew and niece. My nephew, Husdon is 1 and he has become quite obsessed with the Christmas lights. He likes to sit on the window ledge and point at them and any time I facetime him he takes the phone there to show me the lights! He has this quite simple awe and wonder. I love how in the above verse Jesus describes followers of Him as 'children of the light.' I don't think the word children is used by accident. Children have a tendency to like lights! As children my parents would often take my sister and I to London to see the Christmas lights and we loved it! When it comes to our love for Jesus, we can sometimes forget to be like children who are fascinated with the light. Maybe our walk with Jesus becomes stagnant or repetitive and we forget the wonder. When we come to spend time with Jesus, I believe we have to come with our hearts open to see Him in fresh ways, with fresh awe and wonder. I have found myself at times reading the bible out of habit and instantly forgetting what I have just read because my mind is elsewhere. As I sat down a few weeks ago to read the gospel of John I determined I would see it with new wonder. It's funny how a little decision like that can turn things around. As I began to read, I noticed things I had never noticed before and Jesus speaking to me in new and profound ways.

Can I encourage you today, as you go to read the Word of God to read it with fresh eyes? To determine to become 'children of the light' seeing what you read with awe and wonder again.

Day 4

'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

My house is fairly small, so I have a garden shed that is extremely useful for storage. It's a little wooden building that doesn't have any lighting. This doesn't matter when you go to the shed in the daytime as the light pours through the door and generally you can find everything you need. The problem is that more often than not I need to get something from the shed when it is pitch black. I don't have a large light to take with me but just my small light on my phone which I somehow manage to balance off of a shelf in order to look around. In fact, this light comes in handy even taking the trip from my back door to the shed which is only a few meters away. That sounds a bit dramatic, but my pathway seems to be a gathering place for the neighbourhood slugs and so if I don't take the light, I may well end up spending time with them which is not something I ever want to do!!! The small light helps me to see where I am going. Light helps to give direction. That's why we have lights on our cars or should have on our bikes! We are able to then see where we are going. The above verse is one of Jesus' famous 'I am' statements that can be found in the gospel of John. Leading up to this verse, as I said before the word light is mentioned a number of times, but it seems to culminate in this verse where Jesus makes this strong statement about himself. He is the light and if we accept him, we also will have light which means we will be able to see where we are going! In this ever-changing world, we desperately need light to see the way to go! People are facing so many changes that can sometimes cause us to become disorientated as if we are in a maze not knowing the way out. Jesus offers to be our guide through any difficulty or challenge that may come our way. In the book of Psalms it says, *'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.'* (Psalm 119:105). This gives us an assurance that as we read God's Word, he will guide us through the light that he brings. As you sit with Jesus today, why not ask Him to open his word to you and bring direction to your life?

Day 5

"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." John 12:46

I can't remember the last time there was a power cut. Maybe it doesn't happen anymore? I remember as a child that these 'power cuts' seemed to happen quite a lot and when they did, we all had to search around the house for candles to light that would get us through until the lights came back on. It always seemed exciting as it was different from what we were used to! In the above verse Jesus tells us that there is no reason for us to stay in darkness as He is the light. I think there can sometimes be a tendency when there has been some darkness in our lives (difficult times, pain etc.) to hold onto it. This seems a bit of a strange thing to do but so many people get caught up in it! An example would be in the area of unforgiveness. We may know we are forgiven by Jesus but struggle to let go of the shame we may feel from past mistakes...this is like holding onto the darkness or refusing to get a candle when there is a power cut! Or maybe we struggle to forgive others which in turn causes us pain and darkness. But why stay in darkness when there is the option of light! There is a restaurant in London which is in complete darkness. You don't know what you are eating, and you can't even see the person you are sitting with. How strange!!! Apparently, this is a novel thing to do but I'm not so sure! Why choose to sit and eat in darkness when you could do that in the light and enjoy beautiful surroundings?! But so often we do this in life. We hold onto the pain of our past when Jesus has forgiven us and wants us to walk in the light he has set before us!

Why not chose today to forgive yourself and others, let go of your past and choose to walk into the light Jesus has for you!