

Advent 1: I am the light of the world

Isaiah 9:2,5-7 / John 8:12-16 / Matthew 5:14-17

John 8:12-16

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”*

The first sign of Christmas are the lights – in the shops, on homes, down the main street – ever been to the Lobethal lights?

The first sign of Christmas are the lights.

Just like the first sign of spring – is when the new dog digs up the old dog.

The actual timing of Christmas day is a northern hemisphere manmade thing – and makes you wonder why they chose the darkest, darkest time of the year – right in the middle of the winter solstice.

The mother-in-law from northern Germany has been here a few weeks – it’s been quite hot for her. She got home and sent some pictures of her house – it is cold and dark and the house is covered with snow. You would swear the photos are black and white – but they are colour it’s just dark.

Sunrise is 8.00am and sunset is around 3.30 in the afternoon and the light gets less as they get closer to Christmas.

No wonder they made Christmas day to be in the darkest time of the year - peak – they need light – desperately!

Isaiah announces the first sign of Christmas: *Those walking in darkness have seen a great light.*

God coming into the world as a human – as a baby.

Christmas is full of meaning - promises at every turn – a child to grow into a man – to walk with us, to teach us, to heal us, to die for us.

It takes on a whole new meaning if we humble ourselves to realise this baby is coming into a dark, dark, world.

To see why the baby came we must see the darkness.

Be still and know you are a sinner. Be still and know our sins has brought darkness into every nook and cranny on earth.

There is a terrible darkness over the world.

How can there be war when we sit in peace?

How can nations starve as we fast preparing for the food onslaught of Christmas?

Hate, divorce, disease, we live in a Dark place.

You can only see light in darkness.

If the world and ourselves are OK - having no darkness - then we will never see the light.

It's not just dark in Germany – It's dark everywhere.

Mathew recalls the words of Isaiah (9:2,5-7)

*The people walking in darkness have seen a **great** light;
on those living in the land of **deep** darkness a light has dawned.*

God gives us the first sign of Christmas – a light – how fitting and right.

Jesus speaks into the darkness *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”*

You know just before Isaiah's announcement that “the people walking in darkness will see a great light”, we see people trying to escape the darkness of the world.

They were looking for their own light contacting mediums and gurus: *When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.*

It seems even though so many people live in the dark they do look for a way out – mediums and spiritualists and gurus.

We fear the dark.

And most people have a cure, maybe alcohol or drugs, maybe science and technology - Elon Musk might be able to find light for this dark world – that's his new job.

I showed the confirmation kids the old Les Misérables movie – to show them that incredible grace scene around the candle sticks.

But they were more interested in poor old Jean – who ended up with 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread.

But at one stage Jean was thrown in the hole for 6 months for insolence.

They wanted to know about this hole – a deep hole in the floor of the dungeon – absolutely no light.

It wasn't too long when Jean began to go mad screaming and smashing his head into the wall.

We can't live for long in the dark.

The holocaust tells the story how dark human darkness can go.

I fear the darkness of humanity.

The Christmas message is that *on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

It doesn't say from this world a light has sprung up – rather it says upon the world a light has dawned.

A light from outside.

The light is outside of this world - God is gifting it to us.

Jesus says boldly "I am the light of the world".

My light reveals and destroys darkness – is that a scary thought.

He's not coming to destroy you and me he's coming to destroy the darkness.

The light shows the darkness in all its ways and forms.

The light revealing our darkness need not be scary, shameful.

How about we think about it like this: when we know where our darkness is – we can do something about it. We don't know where it is without light.

A few weeks ago Sarah wanted to buy a ute. We found the kind of ute she liked wanted. The price wasn't too bad; she liked it.

I could tell the motor was ok, we were thinking about buying it but something was bothering me. So I got my mechanic mate Trevor to have a look at it.

The first thing he noticed was a spot of rust near the roof– I saw it but didn't think much of it.

He said that it's unusual to have a rust spot there.

He poked and sniffed and crawled underneath with his little mechanics torch and discovered that the whole underneath was almost completely rusted out.

Turns out it the owner was a surfer and the ute spent a lot of time in the sea water.

He shone his torch into the darkness to reveal the sin of driving your car in salt water and not washing it off.

We didn't buy the ute.

Having the light of Jesus shine in our lives is a good thing – because the rust is exposed.

Now if that rust is identified it can be fixed or it can be left, hidden getting worse and worse.

Jesus not only brings light into the darkness to expose our sin but he also fixes it – he gives his blood for our blood, he gives his body for our body.

Jesus would have bought that ute knowing every problem and fixed it up.

Let's change up a gear:

As Jesus enters our hearts the light of the world shines through us.

He says Matthew (5): *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Jesus says, I am the light of the world – Jesus says, we are the light of the world.

But the light we shine is not ours.

Just like the moon has no light of its own, it only reflects the light of the sun.

We reflect the Light of Christ so that all can see him in us.

Our job is that of Jesus: to shine in the darkness – to reveal sin and evil – not to condemn but to help, bless, and forgive.

No wonder Paul calls us Jesus' ambassadors – his ambassadors of light.

Light lets us see in the dark.

Light shines the way for us.

I imagine if there were no light – we must bring light – if we in Germany right now the urgency to bring light to the world is very real – that why they made Christmas day on the shortest, darkest day of the year.

We must bring light and life.

Hear Peter (3:15): *Lets be always be ready to give an account of the hope that we have, for the gospel Light we have is not to be covered, but made obvious for all to see and benefit from, that they, too, may leave the darkness and come into the Light*

Light is never to be covered.

That's one very clear no, no. Don't put your light under a bushel (remember the kid's song) – a bushel is a basket.

Jesus' asks: Do you keep the light of Christ in you all to yourself?

Mum always yells turn your light off

Jesus yells leave your light on.

You know It's not that hard to let you light shine.

Listen o Paul – all you have to do is give up “grumbling and disputing” – that's it!

*Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, **among whom you shine as lights in the world, ...***

Bring the light of Jesus into a life.

It's a process – the light reveals the darkness – that's evil – that's going to be revealed in terrible ways – but there it is the rust to be repaired.

We have the light of Christ - we are blessed to help, to bless, forgive, to encourage - - this terrible, terrible thing, person, activity, you have exposed.

We are not called to judge or condemn.

John 3:17: *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

Go and be ambassadors of light. Be prepared for all kinds of sin and evil.

Bring peace – do not condemn.

Lord Jesus thank you for choosing us to be your light in this part of the world. Equip us to bring peace and love in to the darkness. Amen.