

Coach House Church BEACONS

A GREAT LIGHT

1 S T D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 0

Let me read this excerpt from Isaiah 9:1 and 2

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress..."
"The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned."

Has it dawned on you?

These are well known words from Isaiah chapter 9 describing the coming of the saviour, Jesus, in the future. From this passage we later hear of his nature and character "he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end." (9:6-7), also hinting at a time when God will restore all things to the way they should be.

Much later, Jesus' follower John writes this concerning Jesus' entry into the world, closely connecting with Isaiah's words "(1v9-10) 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him." We live a long way off from John's words, and an even longer way off Isaiah's words. The light has come into the world. If we are Christians, we will know about this specifically and personally because God has changed our lives through the coming of Jesus. Objectively, the light has dawned on us, but how often do we realise it and grasp it?

When I look around, and when I look outside, and when I look inside I see a lot of grim faces including my own. The ongoing slog of working from home, persisting with in-person jobs in an eerily quiet townscape, observing iron gray, montone skies outside which quickly turn dark as you snatch an afternoon moment outside – we are well familiar with it. I do a lot of running and I refuse to stop doing it just because it's dark after work. I've had the funny experience of seeing tonnes of joggers and walkers down by the local cycle track, all trying

to make the most of the dying light, and trying to dodge each other in the gloom. We're all making the most of the twilight.

I felt like writing an endurance Beacon mark II, but it just didn't feel right. I thought, 'haven't we had enough of that?' Realisations need to be in place ABOUT God to fuel our endurance WITH god, for example, knowing God's love for us helps us endure hard times. However, it isn't just knowledge that fuels our relationship with God, but worship and revelation from God which helps us understand on a deeper level who he is. In other words, to see the light.

Additionally, I realised that I had the privilege of delivering this Beacon on the first of December, the beginning of Advent.

So going back to our passage, Isaiah 9:2, what do we really need? We need to see. We need to see Jesus, the light of the world, in these dark times. In the dark, we don't know where we're going, what we're doing or sometimes what we're about to crash into – if you're running down a dark cycle track. On a basic, biological level, our bodies need Vitamin D from the sun to be healthy. And even Vitamin D pills won't stave off seasonal depression, which many people experience during the dark months of winter. Light is important to us and we know it, and it is a key image for Jesus' entry into this world.

There's a million different ways we can think of Jesus as the light. Many ways that are correct. However, perhaps the most helpful is this – Jesus is the light of the world because he reveals who God is, what he is like and how to have a restored relationship with him (the Gospel of John goes into this in a lot of detail). Getting to know Jesus (the Son of God), is the only way to get to know God the father. Without Jesus, we're left groping around in the darkness trying to find God by ourselves, and we never will. Jesus came to earth as a real, walking, talking, historical human being who could be understood and known. If you want to know God, you start with him.

How do we get to know this Jesus, who is the light of the world? Prayer, Bible reading and time spent with other followers are some key ways. However, I would add another: sung worship. I say this because it's been particularly easy to neglect it because we've not been able to sing worship songs together for a long time in a truly corporate way. When we sing worship songs, we do many of the same things we do in prayer/bible reading/meeting other Christians, but it focuses us on God and engages our emotions in a way that other things usually don't. I had this experience as I listened to my mum playing Christmas carols on the piano, and suddenly the lyrics flooded into my mind. I went away, and listened to my personal favourite 'O come O come Emmanuel' which speaks of the longing for Jesus to come into the dark world.

For myself, and for you, I want the reality that Jesus has come into the world to be something we rejoice in and see. We should be amazed. We actually don't have to wait for the light to come into the world as the Israelites did in ancient

times. He has already come. If you don't know much about Jesus, he's here to be known and wants to know you. If you know God as a believer, I encourage you to look at who Jesus is with fresh eyes. It should be like looking directly at the sun, our irises shouldn't quickly recover from it, nor be the same afterwards. It's the brightest light in the universe. I am challenged by this because I've spent a lot of time looking down plodding along. As I listen to worship, I begin to remember who this Jesus is and I look up to the light and rejoice again. Let me pray:



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