

St James, sermon series, 23/09/18.

Who is Jesus?

Isaiah 9:2-7, Philippians 2: 1-11, St John 14; 6-14

Today St John, the gospel writer, speaks of light. He speaks, firstly, about John the Baptist. He tells us that he was not the light but that he came to testify to the light. He goes on to speak of Jesus as, the true light which enlightens everyone who was coming into the world. Although this is one of the best loved parts of the Bible I don't think it's particularly easy to understand. And so...

I entered the word 'light' in the search option on my computer and was looking back through my pieces of writing, where I had included the word light. The word came up highlighted many times and in many different ways. Much of it was a surprise to me. I'd used the word almost unthinkingly.

First of all I noticed that I'd picked up something from the title of a poetry book: 'In the light of conscience'. Yes, conscience is often very likely to light up our mistakes, our shortcomings and our failings. Then there was a marriage sermon where I'd written that the couple at their first encounter had had a 'light hearted' argument about who should be served first at a bar.

Preaching on the prophet Isaiah I'd once asked: 'What light do these verses shed on our understanding of righteousness?' Then I spoke of bringing light into our lives. Then there was Psalm 27: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? Sometimes used when one is in a desperate situation. One piece on the Calling of the Disciple Matthew referred to the painter Caravaggio and spoke of light falling on a hand, a light that comes from a source we can't see. If you've ever done any painting you'll know how important it is to be tuned in to the light. The development of a painter's skills, and

success as a painter, is often dependent on the use of light. I'm sure everyone can think of ways in which we use the word light.

The Prologue from the Gospel of John takes us back to the first chapter of the book of Genesis. In the story of creation the very first thing God says is: 'Let there be light'. How awful it can be to be in darkness; the darkness of depression, illness, uncertainty, unemployment. How much we long for a ray of light and hope. I had a friend who was blind but in spite of that my observations are that although he didn't enjoy physical light yet his life was full of light in so many other ways.

But of course there are the positive aspects of darkness. When we put the light out at night after a busy day and are ready for a good night's sleep we're glad of that enveloping darkness. As I've watched potted bulbs break through the compost to face the light I can't help thinking that this new life of theirs began in darkness.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says: 'You are the light of the world' and also 'Let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven'. When Easter morning arrives we light the Easter Candle and sing: 'The light of Christ, thanks be to God'.

Without a doubt there is much darkness in the world...we only have to watch television to be horrified by some of it. But the church, doctors, nurses, carers, teachers, ourselves hopefully, and so many people work unceasingly to dispel that darkness and bring peace and hope. What a remarkable metaphor light is to describe the work of God... to describe the mission of Jesus Christ and to connect with the wonder of Creation. Who is Jesus, then? One answer we could give is: The Light of the World.

Amen

