



light of the world



2020 Advent Devotionals



The Light Shines in the Darkness:

Advent Devotionals with St. Alban's Fulham

Has this year felt like stumbling in the dark? The uncertainty of this cultural moment we find ourselves in – the pandemic, it's economic effects, and growing divides between people – can all feel just as disorienting as trying to find the light switch in a dark, unfamiliar room.

Even so, there is hope in the midst of the disorder that surrounds us:

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

The four weeks leading up to Christmas are known as Advent. Advent simply means “coming” or “arrival” and focuses our attention to reflect on the arrival of the Light into the darkness – the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World.

During this season of Advent, we will look at this Light: what the Light does in us, through us, and what this Light offers to the world around us. We know by our experiences of finding that light switch in dark rooms that Light reveals things to us, Light dispels darkness, and Light shines for all to see and experience for themselves.

Each week, we will encounter the words of the Bible to discover more and more of who Jesus is and what it means for Jesus to be the Light of the World. Every Sunday, we will begin a new theme and spend the following six days unpacking that theme. We will journey together through reflections to discover the Light and how it transforms and connects to our head, our heart, and our hands (reflecting the connection between our physical bodies, our mental frameworks, and our emotional lives – all good, interconnected things that make us spiritual beings made in God's image).

Use the first reflection on Sundays as a place to return throughout the week as we explore these themes on the Light of the World in Jesus. Some days there will be things to actively engage with, some days there will be questions to challenge us, and other days there will simply be words to sit with and meditate on. None of this is meant to be a check list or step by step guide; these are conversation starters to help you think, feel, and dwell closer to the Light. We have also created a little Christmas playlist to accompany these devotionals that you can find [here](#).

It is our prayer that the Light would shine in whatever circumstance you may find yourself in each day as you join with us in this journey through Advent.

May the Light shine upon our joys, our sorrows, and every circumstance in-between to draw us closer and closer to Jesus, the Light of the World.



Sunday 29 November 2020: Acknowledging the Darkness

The lack of light in a situation can feel unknown – we don't know what's in front of us, we don't know what's behind us, and we don't know what could even be right next to us. When light shines in the darkness, the darkness is dispelled – what was once chaotic finds order and what was once completely unknown can begin to be understood.

Jesus is Light – the One who brings order to chaos and the One who can help us to understand the world around us and the complexities of who we are created to be. As Advent begins, we want to encounter the Light that has the power to dispel the darkness. We will begin to encounter the God who is Light and the God who longs to walk alongside us in the Light of Life. As we begin our journey together this week, let us first reflect on how we are beginning this journey to Christmas together:

Take a moment to write down or speak out loud how you are feeling or what you are thinking about as we begin: What thoughts are rolling around in your mind? What emotions are you feeling? What feels like darkness in your life?

In order to encounter the Light, we first need to acknowledge the darkness.

With all of those things in mind, let's pray and begin this journey with God:
(These words are merely a framework – feel free to use them as a means to find your own words to express what is on your heart and mind)

God of Light, these things that I feel and these things that I can't stop thinking about feel like darkness – I don't understand them and they feel like chaos to me. There are circumstances in the world around me that are overwhelming to me and feel dark. There are things in my own heart and mind that I do not easily want to bring into Your Light. In all things that feel like darkness, help me to welcome your Light (or even begin to want to welcome Your Light). In journeying towards Christmas, prepare my heart, head, and my hands to receive Your Light – to receive Jesus and walk in the presence of the Light. I stretch out my hands palms up before You and surrender my expectations of what Your Light is and what Your Light does. I surrender in the midst of darkness, with my hands, heart, and head open to what Your Light dispels, reveals, and shines. Help me to have eyes to see and experience Your Light.





Monday 30 November 2020: Darkness is Not Dark to God

**even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
– Psalm 139:12 NIVUK**

We tend to think that darkness is a place in which God is far away. If God is Light, then surely darkness is the absence of God? Yet even if we look to the beginning of all things (Genesis 1:1-4), God exists in the darkness and in the words of the psalmist “even the darkness will not be dark to You.”

Yesterday, we got to be honest with God (and even ourselves) about the darkness that we feel around us. Today, we want to recognise that even as things may feel dark around us, we can know that we are not alone. God is with us in whatever feels like darkness in our life.

Read Psalm 139:1-16.

Let's continue to reflect on the things we shared yesterday – all the ways we can acknowledge what feels like darkness in our lives right now. Take time to continue to write or speak out loud the things that are on your heart in this season.

Let's continue reflect on the words of Psalm 139 and begin to recognise that God is with us in everything that feels like darkness.

Our feelings or thoughts do not surprise God; the darkness is not dark to God. Jesus, our Light in the darkness, is Immanuel, a name that means God with us.

God is with us, even (and especially) in the darkness.

We are not alone.





Tuesday 1 December 2020: The Light is a Person

**I have come as a light into the world,
so that everyone who believes in me
should not remain in darkness.**

– Jesus, John 12:46 NIVUK

If we were to read through the Psalms, we could find prayers very similar to the prayers we have honestly prayed before God over the last two days – prayers that express how things feel like darkness around us and how we feel out of control of our lives. So how does God enter into this darkness of our own uncertainty? It's not a strategic plan or a list of answers to all of our questions or the superpower for us to be completely in control of our circumstances. No, God enters into the darkness as a Person that we can be known by and a person that we can know.

That person, that Light, is Jesus.

We're going to spend a lot of time getting to know the Light of Jesus this Advent. If you already know Jesus, you may know Jesus as trustworthy and true. If you don't yet know Jesus, or don't yet know Jesus as a Light that is trustworthy and true, let's keep journeying together to get to know Jesus.

Today, in remembering all those things we've listed or spoken out loud over the last two days, let's take some time to call out for Presence.

First, let's call out to Jesus and bring those things that feel like darkness to Jesus:

"Jesus, You are the Light that shines in the darkness. Thank you for being present in what feels dark to me. Help me to feel Your presence. Help me to tangibly know You are with me."

Reflect today on the reality that Jesus longs to present with you in everything: every action, every joy, every sorrow, every second of waiting for the kettle to boil, and in every inhale and exhale of our life. We need only call out and open ourselves up to be known by Jesus.

Finally, let's call out to community:

God created us for community. We need other people and other people need us. Reach out to someone and invite them to be present with you in what feels dark and ask them if you can be present with them in what feels dark. We need each other, now more than ever.

As we call out to community, May God help us to have the courage to invite others into what feels dark and help us to have the courage to be present in the darkness that others feel.

We are not alone.



Wednesday 2 December 2020: Jesus is the Light

**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
– Jesus, John 10:10**

You may feel like the darkness of this last year has stolen quite a lot from you: loved ones, growth in relationships, and opportunities are all things that we've had to mourn the loss of over this last year in ways that none of us could have expected.

And even in the midst of a chaotic year, even in the midst of our deepest darkness, Jesus comes to us and longs to bring us life to the full. The Light of the World breaks into the darkness to be with us and to walk with us, in the highest of highs and the lowest of lows.

Read and rest in these words:

**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.'
– John 8:12 NIVUK**

Walk through a dark room without any light; it's not an easy thing to do. We stumble around, slam our toes into the corners of furniture, and bump into things that could cause them to break. Now imagine walking in the darkness with a Light. Walking with Jesus as the Light is like having a guide through the darkness. Remember, even the darkness as if it were light to God (Psalm 139:12) and Jesus is surprised by the darkness that could surround us. Jesus, our Light, walks with us in the darkness; we "will never walk in darkness" because we are walking alongside the Light of Life and life to the full.

To practice this, go ahead and try to walk through a dark room (as carefully as you can to not stub any toes or break any potted plants). And then try to walk through that same room with a torch. Notice that nothing about the circumstances of the room changed; the only difference is the Presence of Light.

Jesus, help us to be attentive to how You, the Light of Life, are with us today.

We are not alone. The Light is with us.





Thursday 3 December 2020: Receive the Light

The Light is near to us. The Light has come into the world and has overcome every bit of darkness that seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus offers us an invitation to walk in the Light of Life and life to the full.

...if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

– Paul the Apostle, Romans 10:9–12 NIVUK

Whether you have never been a follower of Jesus, you've been following Jesus for six seconds or seventy years, there is always an invitation to call upon the name of Jesus and walk closer and closer in the Presence of the Light. Paraphrasing those words from Paul in Romans, a pastor and teacher called Eugene Peterson said it this way:

**The word that saves is right here,
as near as the tongue in your mouth,
as close as the heart in your chest.**

It's the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God—"Jesus is my Master"—embracing, body and soul, God's work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That's it. You're not "doing" anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That's salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: "God has set everything right between him and me!"

The Light of Life is closer to you than you could ever imagine and the invitation to walk in the Light is always available. Thinking back to the beginning of the week where we named all the things that feel like darkness, let's begin to receive Jesus' invitation to walk with us in the midst of all those things.

Let's pray together:

"Jesus, Light of the World, and Light of Life to the full, You know all the things that feel like darkness. You are not surprised by any of it and I want to receive Your invitation to follow You and walk in the Light of Your Presence."

We are not alone. The Light is with us.



Friday 4 December 2020: Comfort in the Light

Read Isaiah 40

As we've been exploring and beginning our journey with Jesus, the Light of the World, we can begin to experience the comfort of walking with the Light. If we remember the difference between walking in a dark room versus walking in that same room with torch, we can remember that our circumstances did not undergo a quick fix, but we encountered them differently because of the presence of the light.

All of the things that we named as we started this week may not have changed. When we experience the pain of losing a loved one, the pains of systemic injustice, or the effects of a global pandemic, there is very little we have control over. Walking with the Light of Jesus very rarely provides the dramatic quick fixes that we long for, yet walking with the Light of Jesus offers us a completely different way to walk each day.

In Isaiah 40, we see that we walk with the One who created all things, the One who "sits enthroned above the circle of the earth", and the One who will never "grow tired or weary." In a world that clamours for answers, we can trust that we walk with the Light and alongside the One who holds all things together. We don't know what's going to happen, but the Light of the World is with us.

In the midst of all our questions about the future, let's embrace the invitation to walk in the Presence of the Light and surrender our impossible desire to have complete control. Let's pray this prayer from theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and continue to be attentive to the Presence of the Light walking with us:

God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it, trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.





Saturday 5 December 2020: Resting in the Presence of the Light

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

– Eugene Peterson, paraphrasing Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30

In the Presence of the Light, we are invited to rest. We can embrace that we don't have to be in control, we don't have to strive to do everything right, and we don't have to keep pace with the busy world around us. Walking with the Light of Jesus moves at the pace of Love. We can find comfort the pace of Love because:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

– Paul the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NIVUK

To walk in the patient pace of love is to walk freely and lightly in the Presence of the Light. Are you tired from keeping up with the pace of perfectionism and workaholism? Come and walk in the Presence of the Light and begin to walk in the pace of love. Are you worn out from trying to “be a good person” or “have it all together” or burned out of the religion of trying tick all the “I am a good Christian” boxes? Come and rest in the unforced rhythms of grace where you are loved, known, and have a purpose in the Presence of the Light, not by what you accomplish.

Take some time in your day to rest – completely stop “being productive” or “accomplishing” anything. Get away and sit in the Presence of the Light and simply be with Jesus. Allow your head, heart, and hands to slow down and begin to operate at the pace of Love. Give yourself space to reflect, to laugh and remember joy, and to embrace the light and free life that Jesus longs for us each to deeply know and experience.





Sunday 6 December 2020: Identity in the Light

Walking with Jesus, alongside the Light of the World has the power to transform us from the inside out. The Light reveals things to us – what was once hidden in darkness can now be revealed for what it truly is and how things were intended to be. The Light has the power to open our eyes to how deeply we are loved and the immeasurable worth and purpose that we have as human beings uniquely created in God’s multi-faceted image.

This week, we want to focus on how the Light reveals who we are and what our identity is as we walk with the Light. Last week, we saw how the Light is with us and that we are not alone. This week, we want to explore how the Light shines and reveals to us that we are loved and that we have a purpose.

Imagine (or really go for it!) trying to paint a self-portrait of yourself in the dark – without any light to see your reflection in mirror. Sure, you’d be able to work from memory and have a general idea of to create something, but without the light you’d miss out on those very specific details that truly capture who you are. In the Light, we are able to see the beauty of who we are created to be, we can see how deeply we are loved, and how our life has a unique purpose.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. ...the Light has come into the world... the one who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed as having been performed in God.

– Jesus, John 3:16–17, 19, 21 NLT

Reflect on the things that you already know about your identity – your job, the things that bring you joy in life, your relationships, your hopes, dreams, fears, and all the little things in between that make you think make who you are. Write those things down and keep those handy through the week; that list may grow or change over the next week as we walk in the Light together and discover more about how Jesus loves us and how walking with the Light gives us incredible purpose.





Monday 7 December 2020: We are Loved in the Light

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
– Paul the Apostle, Romans 8:35, 37–39 NIVUK**

Our identity is rooted and completely shaped by Love. The love that Jesus has for us is like a light never goes out (even better than the song by The Smiths). Our fears for the future cannot separate us. Our deepest insecurities cannot separate us. Our biggest failures cannot separate us. And not even death can separate us – nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus.

Nothing.

Grab that list that you made or make another list of aspects of your identity – what you love, what your strengths are, your weaknesses, your dreams, your fears, your hopes. Once you've written a few things down, find the biggest, brightest, boldest marker in your home. If you've got an old lipstick, that's even better. Take that marker or lipstick and write over top of all those things you wrote down: I AM LOVED.

You are loved. You are loved. You. Are. Loved.

That's the core of who we are as people walking with the Light – we walk in the presence of perfect Love, a Love that will never abandon us, and a Love that transforms everything.

Take that piece of paper and put it somewhere you can see it each day. Maybe that's on a mirror in your bedroom or bathroom. Maybe that's on the door of your room that you'll see each day. Let's use this as a reminder each day to recognise that Love is the source of our identity and something that nothing could ever take away from us.





Tuesday 8 December 2020: Children of the Light

For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.

- Paul the Apostle, 1 Thessalonians 5:5 NLT

For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

- Paul the Apostle, Ephesians 5:8-9 NLT

Part of the identity we have as children is that we share DNA and certain familial tendencies with our parents. We may talk with our hands just our father does or maybe snort a little when we laugh like our mum. Maybe we have our dad's eyes or our mum's smile. Maybe we have an analytical mind that we learned in growing up with grandparents who were barristers. Maybe we're adaptable because of moving from place to place growing up. There are aspects of our physical, emotional, and mental identity that comes from our identity as someone's daughter, son, or grandchild.

We are children of the Light – our identity is rooted deep in the love that will never let us go and as those adopted into the family of God. As we trust in Jesus, we are adopted into the family of God and we become children of the Light. As we walk closer and closer to Jesus, we begin to reflect our identity as children of the Light more and more.

We begin to speak with tones of grace and love like our Father speaks. We begin to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep like Jesus. We begin to have eyes to see people for who they are or joy that overflows into a smile for a stranger. We have a mind that is transformed as we walk with the Light and we move at the pace of Love, adaptable, humble, and self-giving for the sake of others.

Take a look at yourself in the mirror: what do you see? Do you see a child of the Light? What characteristics of Jesus do you see in your heart, head, and hands?

Look yourself in the eyes and say out loud:

"I am a child of the Light."

"I am loved."

And repeat these sentences over and over, out loud. Let these statements wash over your heart, head, and hands. Let these statements not just become words to say out loud, but words to deeply trust as we walk in the Light together.



Wednesday 9 December 2020: The Light is Love

We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear.

- John the Apostle, 1 John 4:16, 18 NLT

To walk with Jesus, our Light, is to walk with Perfect Love. Let's remember how Love walks with us and what Love looks like:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. Love does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

- Paul the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT

The Light is the Love that walks beside us. Love calls us children of Light. And Love is in us, casting away fear and dispelling the darkness. The extent to which we are called to walk in the Light encapsulates all that we are – it's our identity as children and it's the very Presence that is with us and living through us.

A great sister in Christ from the twelfth century, Julian of Norwich, wrote about her experiences of encountering God's incredible love in her book Revelations of Divine Love:

I saw that [our Lord] is to us everything which is good and comforting for our help. He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us. And so in this sight I saw that he is everything which is good, as I understand. And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand....

In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it, the second is that God loves it, the third is that God preserves it. But what did I see in it? It is that God is the creator and protector and the lover. For until I am substantially united to him, I can never have perfect rest or true happiness, until, that is, I am so attached to him that there can be no created thing between my God and me.

Go for a walk and begin to notice in the same way that Julian noticed. Look at the birds of the air, look at the way the trees grow, notice the joy in a dog running and playing fetch. Remember these words:

Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?

- Jesus, Matthew 6:26 NLT

You are loved.



Thursday 10 December 2020: Filled with the Light

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

– Paul the Apostle, Ephesians 3:16–19 NIVUK

That deep and wide, long and high, perfect love of Jesus is a Light that fills us each day. Paul prays for us that we may be rooted in that Love and that Love would fill us up to the full.

Let's think about a cup – a cup can only be filled with something if there is space for the cup to be filled. If there's already something else in the cup, then it cannot be filled with anything new. If we are rooted in things other than the Light and Love of Jesus and if we are filled to the measure with things other than the fullness of God, we limit ourselves and we're not able to enter into the full life that Jesus longs for us to encounter.

What needs to be uprooted in order to allow yourself to be rooted in Love? What needs to be emptied out of the metaphorical cup of our lives in order for the deep and wide, long and high Love of Jesus to fill us to fullness?

Uprooting and emptying our desires is a process towards a deeper freedom. We can all recognise that there are things in our lives that put distance between us and Jesus, making it more and more difficult to walk in the Light of Life to the full. And that process of uprooting or emptying may feel painful at times. Know and trust that Jesus is not longing to work against our desires or our hearts, but that Jesus is longing to work for our desires and our hearts to be in deep relationship with God.

Reflect on and invite the people around you to help you uproot or empty whatever is stopping you from being full of the Light of the World and the Light of Life to the full. And take special note and rejoice in the ways you have already seen that fullness come into your life. Trust that God is constantly at work and continues to move at the pace of Love as we walk with the Light of Jesus.





Friday 11 December 2020: Overflowing with the Light

And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows. May he, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy...

- Paul the Apostle, 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

As we walk in the Light of Life and as we allow Jesus to fill us, our lives will begin to overflow. And this is something that happens to us all the time. For instance, think about the best meal you've ever had and think of how many people you've told about that meal. Whether it was telling all your friends to check out Tacos MX on Lille Road (honestly, it's real, authentic Mexican tacos and they are delicious) or sharing that recipe with everyone you know, we can't help but share the goodness that we've experienced in life.

Whether it's a love of tacos or the transformational love of Jesus, our lives will naturally overflow with the things that fill our hearts. Once we experience the radical, transformational Light of what it means to be loved by Jesus, we begin to overflow with the same radical, transformational love:

We love each other because he loved us first.

If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

- John the Apostle, 1 John 4:19-21 NLT

As we are transformed by walking closer and closer in relationship with Jesus, the Light of the World, we begin to overflow with the same love, grace, and compassion that we experience in relationship with Jesus towards the people around us.

Let's practice radical, transformation love:

Do something completely out of the ordinary for someone today, especially if that person doesn't deserve it. We may be tempted to do something kind and loving for the people we get along with the most, but let's take things a bit further today – let's radically love and show compassion for the people that we may not feel as easily inclined to love.

Take some time to pray and ask God how you can radically love outside of your comfort zone.

Maybe that's buying flowers for that co-worker that annoys you. Or that's sending an encouraging text to your cousin who drives you crazy at Christmas dinners with wild political rants. Let the love you're experienced in walking with the Light overflow into your relationships with others.



Saturday 12 December 2020: Resting in Light of Love

As we have journeyed this last in walking closer to Jesus, the Light of Life, we have been exploring our identity as children of Light and people who are deeply loved.

Today, we're going to rest in that love through a contemplation exercise to help us contemplate and reflect on God's love for us. What is contemplation? Contemplation is taking time to deeply reflect and to thoughtfully look at something. Today we want to engage our heart and heads in order to deeply reflect and think about God's love for us.

To begin, make space to just be comfortable: get cosy in your favourite chair, plant your feet firmly into the floor, and open your hands and lay them palms facing upward in a posture to receive from God who is with you right now. Take three deep breaths. Feel the full weight of your chest rise and fall with each inhale and exhale.

Contemplate God looking at you.

Imagine the face of God looking at you with a disposition of love. Imagine the face of God looking at you a disposition of joy. Imagine the face of God looking at you with a disposition of peace.

Contemplate God looking at the people you love in your life.

Imagine the face of God looking at the people you love with a disposition of love. Imagine the face of God looking at the people you love with a disposition of joy. Imagine the face of God looking at the people you love with a disposition of peace.

And finally, contemplate yourself walking alongside God.

Imagine yourself as a person of love. Imagine yourself as a person of joy. Imagine yourself as a person of peace.

May we find rest in embracing God's deep love, joy, and peace over each of us as we walk with Jesus, our Light.





Sunday 13 December 2020: The Way of the Light of Life

As we've been journeying together in Advent, we've seen on Jesus, the Light of the World, walks with us in darkness and fills us with the Light of God's Love. This week, we want to explore what it means to walk in the Way of the Light and how God's Light can overflow from us in tangible ways. God's Word, Jesus Himself, is a guide for our feet and a Light for us to walk in. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" – Jesus offers us an invitation to walk in the Light that leads to life and life to the full unlike anything else. To walk in the Light is to be with Jesus, do what Jesus did, and to become more like Jesus.

**The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.
– Paul the Apostle, Romans 13:12**

What does it look like to wear the armour of light and put aside the deeds of darkness? Eugene Peterson beautifully paraphrases Paul's thoughts on this from Galatians 5:

It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time (the deeds of darkness): repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.

But what happens when we live God's way (putting on the armour of light)? God brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

Let's journey together – walking with the Light, side by side with Jesus and allow the Light to overflow from our hearts to the people we encounter each day.





Monday 14 December 2020: Walking with Eyes on the Light

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

– Jesus, Matthew 6:22–23 NIVUK

When we learn to drive, one of the top things we're taught is to keep our eyes on the road and not be distracted. We recognise the importance of keeping our eyes on where we're going – Jesus is saying very similar things to us in this teaching.

Whatever we are putting our attention on and whatever captivates our attention can have dramatic effects on our spiritual, mental, emotional, and even physical health. Think of our eyes, our attention, like windows:

Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!

– Eugene Peterson, paraphrasing Matthew 6:22–23

What are we most focused on? If you're not sure, take a look at how you spend your money, what things fill up your diary, and what takes priority in your life. We are invited to not only walk in the Light, but to fix our eyes on Jesus. As we fix our eyes on Jesus, making Jesus the centre of our attention, we will continue to be filled with Light and that Light will overflow into how we live, speak, and think.

As we begin our weeks, how can we fix our eyes on the Light? Practicing the Presence of God, being attentive to God's Presence with you in every moment of the day, can be one way to keep our eyes focused. Another way to focus is to limit distractions – what's keeping our eyes off the Light? Do you find yourself gossiping – how can you shift your focus from cutting others down to lifting other up? Do you create space for God in your daily rhythms? Create space in your day to encounter God's word or be still in prayer, even if it's just ten minutes at the beginning of your day.

May we open our eyes wide to receive the abundance of Light that comes from walking with Jesus.





Tuesday 15 December 2020: Walking in the Light: Loving our Neighbours

For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfils the requirements of God’s law.

– Paul the Apostle, Romans 13:9–10 NLT

Loving our neighbours is absolutely synonymous with walking in the Light. Paul, as well as Jesus, sum up all the teachings of the Bible in that single commandment to love our neighbours.

We live in one of the most self-centric cultures of human history. It’s so easy for us to be distracted by only caring for our individual needs that we lose sight of loving our neighbour as Jesus teaches us. We must allow the Light of Jesus within us to shine on others. So how do we do this? How can we love our neighbours?

Read Romans 12.

Read it three times over and take note of what stands out to you each time you read through the chapter. What gifts resonate with you? What is God highlighting for you to do? Spend some time asking God how you can tangibly do something to share the Light of Love to your neighbours.

Now go and do it. If God highlighted words like hospitality, reach out to someone you know who may be isolating in this time and bring them a meal. If God highlighted words such as encourage, send an encouraging message to someone you know is having a hard time.

In these final few days before Christmas, in a time where people may be feeling especially lonely or isolated, imagine what God could do through you to share love with those around you every single day! Imagine the joy, hope, love, and peace that could overflow from your heart to other people!

Take a step of faith to do something every day in preparation for Christmas to love your neighbours.





Wednesday 16 December 2020: Walking in the Light: Loving our Enemies

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

- Jesus, Matthew 5:43-47 NIVUK

This is probably one of the most controversial teachings of Jesus and one of the most challenging aspects of walking in the Light. In many ways, this teaching goes against everything we're taught and our knee-jerk reactions when we are in conflict with other people. How can Jesus ask this of us?

Remember, the Light overflows from our own hearts. We are able to be merciful to others because we have experienced radical mercy from Jesus. We are able to love our enemies because we were once enemies and we have been radically loved:

**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

- Romans 5:8

When we purposely chose to walk away from the Light, when we purposely chose our way instead of the Way of Jesus, we made ourselves enemies of God. And even still, Jesus loves us and longs for us to walk alongside Jesus in the Light of Life to the full. We have experienced a radical love as enemies and have been brought back into relationship with God. We are called to do the same for our enemies – we are called to allow the Light to overflow out of our hearts in order for them to experience the Light of Love and relationship with Jesus.

So, let's pray for our enemies:

Take some deep breaths. Focus your attention on God's love, joy, and peace over you. Take a few more deep breaths, breathing in that love, joy, and peace.

Now imagine your enemy sitting across from you – notice they are breathing the same air you breathe; they are joining you in the presence of God in this moment.

Imagine God looking at your enemy with the same love, joy, and peace that God looks at you with. Imagine yourself looking at your enemy with the same love, joy, and peace that you experience from God.

Pray that God would bless your enemy this week. Pray for their health and for them to experience the same love, joy, and peace that you experience in walking in the Light.



Thursday 17 December 2020: The Light Expands Our Horizon of Concern

Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them and do not hide from relatives who need your help. Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the Lord will answer; 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply. Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumours! Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a rebuilders of walls and a restorer of homes. Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the Lord's holy day. Honour the Sabbath in everything you do on that day and don't follow your own desires or talk idly. Then the Lord will be your delight. I will give you great honour and satisfy you with the inheritance I promised to your ancestor Jacob. I, the Lord, have spoken!

- Isaiah the Prophet, Isaiah 58:6-14 NLT

This is it what it looks like to walk in the Way of Jesus. This is what it looks like to walk with the Light overflowing from the Light of Jesus working within your heart.

Read these words over and over. Allow them to sink deep into your head, heart, and hands.

As we walk with Jesus, the Light of God's love overflows from our own heart and expands the horizon of our concern, moving from our own needs and looking out for the needs of others. Just as the sun rises along the horizon, spreading more and more light to the world, so too must the Light of God's love in us begin to shine beyond ourselves, beyond those we love, and shine upon our enemies and the those who are in desperate need of the Light.

As you read these words from the prophet Isaiah, notice what God is highlighting to you.

Take a step of faith to act on what God has highlighted to you – whether that's no longer spreading rumours or helping relatives.

Let the Light shine through your actions, making even the darkest situations of need as bright as the noonday because of the Light of Jesus' shining through you.





Friday 18 December 2020: The Light Reaches the Fringes

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

**"Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."**

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished...

– Luke 2:8-18 NLT

Shepherds were near the bottom of the social hierarchy of that day – it was not an glamorous occupation and usually meant months living away from community covered in filth. Shepherds were often considered "unclean", meaning in this Jewish context, they were not allowed to engage in temple worship. In many ways, the shepherd are one of the least likely groups of people to be the first recipients of the best news ever proclaimed.

But the Light shines to the fringes and invites all to come and worship Jesus.

The radiance of God's good news of Jesus shines further than we could ever expect it, reaching to the very people we would least expect.

Who are the people on the fringes in your life? Who are the outcasts at your workplace? Who are the people who people often discredit or ignore?

Pray and ask God how you can proclaim good news to those people – the Light of Jesus can reach out to them through a kind word, gesture of care, or an act of kindness that overflows out of your life.

Let the Light of Jesus shine through the way you care for people on the fringes.



Saturday 19 December 2020: Resting as We Walk in the Light

Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the Lord's holy day. Honour the Sabbath in everything you do on that day and don't follow your own desires or talk idly. Then the Lord will be your delight.

– Isaiah the Prophet, Isaiah 58:13–14

Throughout our journey in walking with the Light this Advent, you'll notice that we've been focusing on resting each Saturday. This is to help us engage with the practice of Sabbath – something that God speaks of throughout Scripture as a Holy day and a practice that brings us life as we walk in the Light alongside Jesus. Sabbath is a day to have a deeper focus on Jesus and a time to fully rest and stop working. We follow this practice, not only because we are commanded to, but because this is truly the way to life to the full.

We won't get fully bogged down into the psychology behind the value of Sabbath, but one study shows that those who practice Sabbath typically live nearly a decade longer than those who don't (just google "Do Seventh Day Adventists Live Longer?").

We want to continue to walk in the Way of the Light alongside Jesus, loving our neighbours, our enemies, and those furthest away from community – these are all incredibly important things to be doing. And we also want to continue to draw closer to the Light – to stop, rest, and bask in the Light of being with Jesus and becoming more like Jesus through Sabbath.

To rest today, let's pray this Night prayer from the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer. This prayer focuses on the beauty of resting at the end of the day, recognising that can rest and simply let it be after a long day:

Lord, it is night. The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be.

The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in You.

The night is quiet. Let the quietness of Your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Rest in the Light of being loved by Jesus. We look expectantly to another day of sharing the Light with those around us.



Sunday 20 December 2020: The Light Shines Through Broken Vessels

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

– Paul the Apostle, 2 Corinthians 4:4-7, 16-18 NIVUK

As we near closer to Christmas, the joyous celebration of the Light coming into the world, we want to reflect on how the Light shines through us. Paul compares our bodies to clay jars – something that would have been incredibly familiar to everyone of his time. These kinds of jars are fragile, often cracking. And yet, it's in these fragile, cracked vessels that God desires to store the greatest treasure – God places God's own Presence, His own Light, within our jars of clay.

But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

– Paul the Apostle, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIVUK

Yes, our gifts and talents and all our strengths have the ability to give glory to God and can act as a catalyst to help bring people closer to Jesus in walking in the Light. Yet, time and time again in God's Word, we see that our weaknesses have the ability to bring glory to God. Our vulnerability with others about what we are struggling with, our recognition of our failures, and our pursuit of forgiveness and reconciliation when we have wronged others – it's those weaknesses that allow the Light from within us to shine through our cracks and show the power of the Light at work within us.

Spend some time praying and focusing of the Light of Jesus – how can you be vulnerable with someone today in sharing your weaknesses or struggles in order to show the power of the Light at work through you? As the poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen once said, "there is a crack, a crack in everything – that's how the light gets in."



Monday 21 December 2020: We Shine for All to See

**I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,
to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.**

**I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.
- Isaiah the Prophet, Isaiah 42:6-7;49:6**

In the same way that we have learned to allow the Light of Love to overflow from the love we have experienced in walking in the Light alongside Jesus, the Light can shine through us to proclaim the goodness of God to others.

We celebrate at Christmas that the Light has entered the world and that we have hope, joy, peace, and love in knowing Jesus, the one who saves us and bring us back into relationship with God. The angels proclaimed this to the shepherds; the shepherds proclaimed this to everyone they knew after they saw Jesus. The message overflows from their heart and they can't help but share it with others.

Do we have that same burden to tell others about Jesus?

We'll ask more practical questions and have some opportunities to step out in faith to share about Jesus, but before jumping into action, let's pause and take a second to examine our hearts and motivations behind why we would tell others about Jesus.

We've taken a look at what it means to walk alongside Jesus in the Light of life: we can trust that we are never alone because the Light is always with us and guiding us and that we are loved beyond measure in the presence of the Light of Jesus. Do we truly experience this as life to the full? Do we trust that following the Way of Jesus, walking in the Way of Light is truly the life we were all meant to live?

Whatever our answer to that question will overflow into whether or not we long for others to experience the same love, joy, and peace that we have experienced in the Light.

Take time to reflect on what overflows from your heart: does it overflow with a desire to share about who Jesus is and how Jesus has transformed your life? What message do you proclaim to those around you through your words and your actions?



Tuesday 22 December 2020: We Bear Witness to the Light

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

- John 1:1-8 NIVUK

John was a man who knew how to let the God's Light shine through his life. He lived in order to bear witness to the Light of Jesus, not to shine his own light. We can learn from the example of John and bear witness to the Light of Jesus in tangible ways through our words and our work.

But what does it mean to bear witness to the Light?

Let's think about how we respond to everyday conversations. When someone asks us questions like "How was your weekend?" or "What are your plans for the week?", how often do we bring up our relationship to Jesus? It doesn't need to feel like the cringy Christian response or even something forced – it can be as simple as "I watched my church's service on my couch in my PJs and then had a delicious Sunday lunch at home" or responding with "I'll pray for you" when someone shares that they've been struggling with loneliness.

God's Spirit can move in powerful ways as we just remain faithful to bearing witness to the Light. As God continues to move in our hearts and as we experience the Light in our own lives, that Light can overflow from our experiences in the Light of Jesus. In the same way that witnesses come forward to share what they've seen at the scene of a crime, we can bear witness to share how we are experiencing the Light in our lives.

How is God inviting you to bear witness to the Light in your relationships?

As we near closer and closer to Christmas, who are the people you feel God prompting you to share about how God is working in your life? Think about a way that God has answered a prayer or felt close through this Advent season and share that with someone.





Wednesday 23 December 2020: We Do Not Hide Our Light

No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

- Jesus, Matthew 5:15-16

As we walk with Jesus, the Light of the World, we are invited into abundant love, joy, and peace. The Light of Jesus transforms us from the inside out, and this is something that we shouldn't keep for ourselves – that Light is meant to be shared and experienced with everyone around us! The message of Christmas is that the Light has entered into the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it! The Light is shining and we have the opportunity to shine that Light for all to see!

So often, however, we hide that Light at work within us. We hide the Light at work under baskets of fear – maybe that's fear of being judged, fear of not being a "good enough Christian", or fear of being known.

What stops you from allowing the Light of Jesus to shine through you?

There is no place for shame in the Light of Jesus – it's okay to come to Jesus with our fears and trust that not even our fears can separate us from the Love in the Light of Jesus. We can come honestly into the Light, bring our fears out from the darkness, and allow them to be seen. We are jars of clay, weak and full of cracks – that's how the Light gets out. Jesus is never asking us to be flawless vessels of Light, but to be faithful in bearing witness to the Light at work within us in whatever place we find ourselves.

As you come to Jesus with whatever basket you may be using to hide the Light at work within you, know that you are loved, you are not alone, and that you have a purpose.

How can you surrender your basket in the arms of Love and allow the Light to shine, even and especially through your weaknesses?

Remember, God's Spirit helps us in all our weaknesses and through our weaknesses, God's Spirit is strong – the Light shines with love, joy, and peace through all the cracks in our jars of clay in beautiful ways.





Thursday 24 December 2020: The Light Makes All Things New

Tomorrow is Christmas – the birth of Jesus is near and the Light is on the horizon!

The Light entered into the darkness, conquered that darkness, and invites us to walk in the Light of Life. Jesus opened up a whole new reality for us to turn away from the darkness: we are invited into the Light of humility and love in the midst of selfishness and hate. And ever since the birth of Jesus, the Light has been moving to transform the world into something brand new and full of God's Light. This is the Kingdom of God and the renewal of all things.

It's here now and there's more Light coming on the horizon right now! The Kingdom of God is already here, but not yet fully here; we are invited to be a part of what God is doing to make all things new.

This is the promise we can cling to, knowing that this what it will look like when the Light completely makes all things new:

(God) will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the (darkness) has passed away. (The renewal of the Earth) does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and (Jesus) is its lamp. The nations will walk by (Light), and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

- The Apostle John, Revelation 21:4, 23-25

As those who walk in the Light, this is our hope and this is the reality we are invited to live into every single day. We can know, in the midst of all our darkness, that God wipes away all our tears and that nothing, not even death, can separate us from God's love. We walk by the Light of Jesus and live as witness to the Light so that more and more people can know the same love, joy, and peace that has transformed our lives.

On this day before the celebration of the Light entering into the world, take some time to reflect on this promise. We get to live in an entirely different reality to the world around us – we walk in the Light and the Light shines through us.

Reflect on the promise of God making all things new in the world: The tears we cry in the loneliness we feel in this season will be wiped away. The pain of losing loved ones will not have the final word. The mourning of cancelled plans and disappointments will pass away. Allow that hope to rest deep into your bones.

Light a candle and reflect on the flickering light before your eyes. Play your favourite Christmas songs and imagine that little flame dancing along to music. How can you embrace the joy and hope of the promise of all things being made new in the Light?

Sing along with all your heart. Dance to the music. The Light has come.



Friday 25 December 2020: The Light is Here

Happy Christmas!

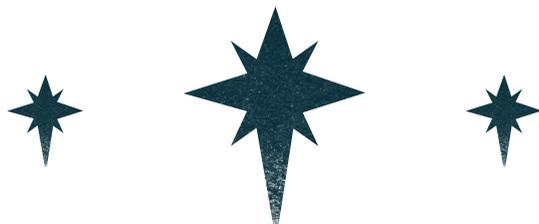
It's our hope that you have walked through this season of Advent with us and have truly encountered God's Light in magnificent ways to help you know just how deeply you are loved, that you are not alone, and that you have incredible purpose as a vessel of the Light.

Our prayer is that you can continue to walk in the Light of Life, knowing Jesus more and more and being transformed by the Light at work in your life.

May the Light of Jesus shine through you for all to see and experience the love, joy, and peace of being known and loved by God!



**We hope you have a
wonderful month of advent
and find these devotions
helpful during this time.**



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