

**OPENING SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:1-5, 14-19 NIV UK**

**The beginning**

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

**3** And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. **4** God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.....

**14** And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, **15** and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. **16** God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. **17** God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, **18** to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

**OPENING PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, as we begin this season of advent, please help us to prepare our hearts and minds to embrace the truth and reality of the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ and all it means to us. As we begin to put up lights to shine out in this dark season, help us to remember Jesus, who is the light of the world bringing hope to those who are in spiritual darkness.

As we gather together today, may Your light shine in us and fill us afresh that we might carry your light wherever we go.

Help us now to open our hearts to receive all that you would say to us as we bow down to give our praise, worship and thanksgiving to You, the Holy God who loves us, and gave His son for us that we might be freed from the burden of sin and come freely into Your loving presence. AMEN.



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**WORSHIP SONG: Light of the world** <https://youtu.be/-MmRGSEG2LM>

Light of the world  
You stepped down into darkness  
Opened my eyes, let me see  
Beauty that made this heart adore you  
Hope of a life spent with you

*Here I am to worship  
Here I am to bow down  
Here I am to say that you're my God  
You're altogether lovely  
Altogether worthy  
Altogether wonderful to me*

King of all days  
So highly exalted  
Glorious in heaven above  
Humbly you came to the earth you  
created  
All for love's sake became poor

*Here I am to worship  
Here I am to bow down  
Here I am to say that you're my God  
You're altogether lovely  
Altogether worthy  
Altogether wonderful to me*

I'll never know how much it cost  
To see my sin upon that cross

*Here I am to worship  
Here I am to bow down  
Here I am to say that you're my God  
You're altogether lovely  
Altogether worthy  
Altogether wonderful to me*

Source: [Musixmatch](#)  
Songwriters: Tim Hughes  
Light Of The World (Here I Am) lyrics © Adonia Verlag



**WORSHIP SONG: You were the word in the beginning**

[https://youtu.be/CUBBlddm\\_rM](https://youtu.be/CUBBlddm_rM)

You were the Word at the beginning  
One with God the Lord Most High  
Your hidden glory in creation  
Now revealed in You our Christ

*What a beautiful name it is  
What a beautiful name it is  
The name of Jesus Christ my King  
What a beautiful name it is  
Nothing compares to this  
What a beautiful name it is  
The name of Jesus*

You didn't want heaven without us  
So Jesus, You brought heaven down

My sin was great, Your love was greater  
What could separate us now  
*What a wonderful name it is  
What a wonderful name it is  
The name of Jesus Christ my King  
What a wonderful name it is  
Nothing compares to this  
What a wonderful name it is  
The name of Jesus*

Death could not hold You  
The veil tore before You  
You silenced the boast of sin and grave  
The heavens are roaring

The praise of Your glory  
For You are raised to life again  
You have no rival  
You have no equal  
Now and forever, God You reign  
Yours is the kingdom  
Yours is the glory  
Yours is the name above all names

What a powerful name it is  
What a powerful name it is  
The name of Jesus Christ my King  
What a powerful name it is  
Nothing can stand against  
What a powerful name it is  
The name of Jesus  
You have no rival  
You have no equal  
Now and forever, God You reign

Yours is the kingdom  
Yours is the glory  
Yours is the name above all names  
What a powerful name it is  
What a powerful name it is  
The name of Jesus Christ my King  
What a powerful name it is  
Nothing can stand against  
What a powerful name it is  
The name of Jesus  
What a powerful name it is  
The name of Jesus  
What a powerful name it is  
The name of Jesus

Source: [Musixmatch](#)  
Songwriters: Ben Fielding / Brooke Ligertwood  
What A Beautiful Name lyrics © Hillsong Publishing,  
Hillsong Music Publishing Australia

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**ADVENT CANDLE lighting and PRAYER: As we light the first candle today, we light up hope as we come to the end of this year that has been so difficult and painful for so many people around the world. Help us, Lord, by this symbolic act, to see things from Your heavenly perspective and to speak hopeful words that bring light and life to those who are in darkness. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN**



**WORSHIP SONG: Like a candle flame** <https://youtu.be/teZaQUKjx24>

Like a candle flame  
Flickering small in our darkness  
Uncreated light  
Shines through infant eyes

Stars and angels sing  
Yet the earth sleeps in shadows  
Can this tiny spark  
Set a world on fire?

*Chorus*

*God is with us, alleluia (Men)*  
*God is with us, alleluia (Women)*  
*Come to save us, alleluia (Men)*  
*Come to save us (Women)*  
*Alleluia! (All)*

Yet his light shall shine  
From our lives, Spirit blazing  
As we touch the flame  
Of his holy fire

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**Bible Reading: John 1:1-18 NIV UK**



*Main Scripture: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. <sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, 'This is the one I spoke about when I said, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."') <sup>16</sup> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

**Sermon Prayer:** *"Holy Spirit as we approach Your Word, please shine Your light on anything we need to pay particular attention to, because You know us better than we know*

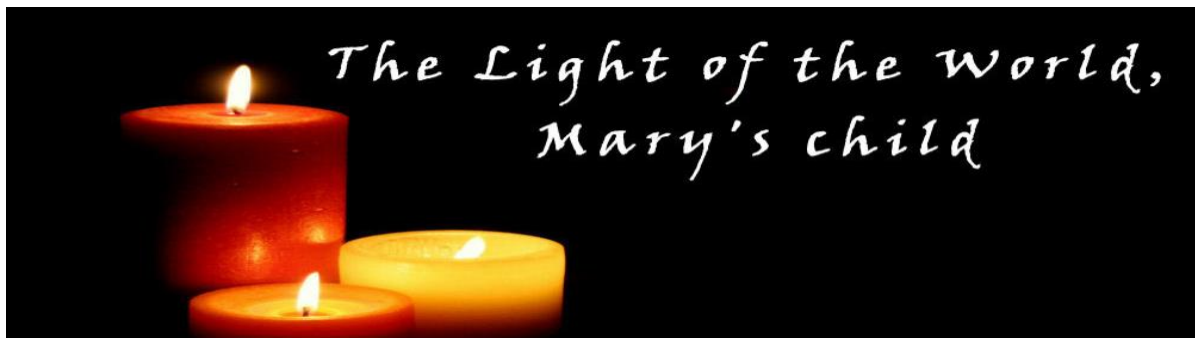
*ourselves and know what each of us needs to hear. Come have Your way in us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.”*

## **SERMON: THE COMING OF THE LIGHT**

Picture in your mind a very dark place or room – completely black. What does that feel like? Many people, especially children, are afraid of the dark. Why is that? Fear of not being able to see if someone is coming to attack? Loss of control? Not knowing what is in the room?

Some seek comfort from having a night light. Why? – because when even a small amount of light is present there is no darkness. Where there is light darkness cannot exist. Where there is light there is hope.

So today as we begin the season of advent, a season of waiting with expectation, looking towards the celebration of the coming into the world of the “Word become flesh”, Immanuel – God with us – the Christ child who was both human and Divine – who claimed to be the “Light of the World”, we are going to explore this theme of looking towards the coming of the light that would drive back the darkness in the world.



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### **(1) The coming of the light**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

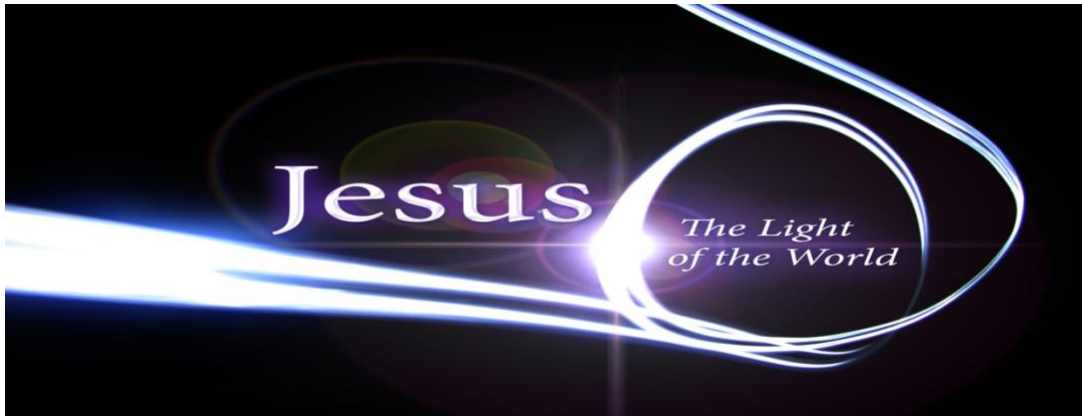
Jesus – the Word (Logos) was there at the beginning, with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, actively involved in Creation. (Genesis 1:1-2)

In the beginning God first created light and separated light from darkness – His first spoken word “Let there be light” – put things in order and communicated the importance of light. (Genesis 1:3-4)

When Jesus began his ministry on earth, he referred to himself as “The Light of the World”

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](#)

Such amazing words that carry depth and impact on every person on the planet.



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John the Baptist, mentioned in our passage, also said that he himself was not the light but had come to bear witness and prepare the way for the coming of the light.

He quoted from the prophet Isaiah in Matthew 3:3 to explain this from Scriptures that the people of the time would be very familiar with.

“ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: ‘A voice of one calling in the wilderness, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”’”

Isaiah prophesied many things about the birth, life and suffering of Jesus and this verse is often quoted in Christmas Carol services during Advent.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. Isaiah 9:2 NIV UK

In this verse there is reference to the light of salvation that is available through Jesus for anyone who believes. A non-believer would be someone who is “walking in darkness”, missing out on the love, peace, hope, guidance, forgiveness and other spiritual blessings that flow from being in a relationship with God and we will go on to explore some of these in relation to our passage.

## (2) Light of the world brings life

*<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*

Jesus, himself, said that he had come in order that humans could have a full, abundant life.

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10 NIV UK

But here Jesus contrasts the darkness that enters into our lives if , either we have not given our lives to Jesus or are not on guard against spiritual attack from the devil–negativity, critical thoughts, greed, temptation, selfishness, evil, wrongdoing, hurting others.....compared with the abundant life that he came to give us.

He showed us how a human who is full of the Holy Spirit can live and the things it is possible for them to do when connected to the kingdom of heaven.

After all, he said that we would do even greater things than he did – the miracles, healings and deliverance we read about in the Bible. In fact, we can only ever be **fully human** following the example that Jesus set for us, if we live empowered by the Holy Spirit, through whom we have access to the mind of Christ.

We can know things about situations and people that only God knows about. We can speak out words God gives us that someone needs to hear. We can see pictures or hear words from God that speak about the future.

The full, abundant life is one of peace that comes from being in close relationship with God and trusting Him with everything – no need to worry, no need to be anxious.

But the devil knows our weak points and tries to rob us of that peace. We need therefore to be disciplined about spending time with God and in having other people pray for us to watch our backs.

All of the fruit of the Spirit outlined in Galatians 5, a passage that describes “life in the Spirit”, which is what Jesus talked about, can be ours in ever increasing measures when we cultivate a close walk with the Lord.



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But remember that he said it alongside the reminder that we are in a spiritual battle against the darkness into which we need to bring his light.

#### **Reflection questions:**

**How do you feel about your life? How do you think it measures up to the sort of life that Jesus modelled for us? Any changes being prompted by the Holy Spirit?**



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### (3) Light of the world exposes the darkness of sin and drives back spiritual darkness

<sup>5</sup> *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings utter darkness into the light. Job 12:22 NIV UK*

In connection with the last point, another part of the spiritual battle can be the damage done by unconfessed sin that we think no-one knows about. But God **does** know and it can be a barrier in our relationship with him and with others and can rob us of that full, abundant life.

If we confess (in confidence to a person we trust) any deep, dark, secret sin, then we bring it into the light and darkness loses its power over us and we can, by the grace of God begin to overcome the effects of that sin.

Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for all our sins so that we can be forgiven as soon as we say sorry to God. And when he came back to life he demonstrated victory over the powers of darkness - remember light always drives back darkness!

### 4) Light of the world overturns the darkness of religion

<sup>17</sup> *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

*Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, <sup>2</sup> 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!'*

<sup>3</sup> *Jesus replied, 'And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup> For God said, "Honour your father and mother" and "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death."<sup>5</sup> But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is "devoted to God," <sup>6</sup> they are not to "honour their father or mother" with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. <sup>7</sup> You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:*

<sup>8</sup> *"These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*

<sup>9</sup> *They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.'* Matthew 15:1-9 NIV UK

Sadly, many man-made rules and traditions have emerged in Christianity that have become more important than the core message about love and relationships.

Jesus, challenged the religious people of his day about the futility of following rules mindlessly instead of following the spirit and loving intention behind the rules.

People who follow "ought", "should", "must", "ought not", "should not", "must not" etc are easy prey to the devil and can become critical and judgemental instead of loving and merciful.

Jesus taught that **LOVE** overrules everything – we need to pray and ask what the loving thing to do would be in response to difficult people and difficult situations.



<sup>34</sup> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’” <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: “‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’” <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’ Matthew 22:34-40 NIV UK

## 5) Carry the Light into the world

Jesus commissions each of us to go on carrying his light into the darkness of the world around us. The words we speak, our tone of voice, the things we do, the way we do them have the power to change the spiritual atmosphere around us and drive back the darkness. Being kind, standing up against wrongdoing and injustice, caring for the poor, the refugee, caring for the environment, making time for the lonely, praying for others – so many ways to bring the light of Christ into situations to overcome darkness.

‘Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

<sup>8</sup> **Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.**

<sup>9</sup> Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I.

‘If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, <sup>10</sup> and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,

**then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.** Isaiah 58:6-10 NIV UK

<sup>14</sup> ‘You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> 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. Matthew 5:14-15 NIV UK

### Reflection question:

**How can you carry the light of Jesus into this dark world?**

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for this season of advent. Help us to reflect on what we have heard today in relation to understanding the real significance of the birth of Jesus Christ. And as we reflect, please pour out your Spirit on us so that Your light will increase in us and shine out to others to bring glory to You and bear fruit for Your kingdom. In the mighty name of Jesus we pray. AMEN



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Sermon reflection song: [Look to the skies](https://youtu.be/Ke3EXG1828E) <https://youtu.be/Ke3EXG1828E>

Look to the skies, there's a celebration  
Lift up your heads, join the angel song  
For our Creator becomes our Saviour  
As a baby born!  
Angels, amazed, bow in adoration  
'Glory to God in the highest heaven!'  
Send the good news out to every nation  
For our hope has come

*Worship the King - come, see His  
brightness*

*Worship the King, His wonders tell*

*Jesus our King is born today*

*We welcome You, Emmanuel*

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God  
Father for ever, the Prince of Peace  
There'll be no end to Your rule of justice

For it shall increase  
Light of Your face, come to pierce our  
darkness  
Joy of Your heart come to chase our  
gloom  
Star of the morning, a new day dawning  
Make our hearts Your home

Quietly He came as a helpless baby  
One day in power He will come again  
Swift through the skies He will burst with  
splendour

On the earth to reign  
Jesus, I bow at Your manger lowly  
Now in my life let Your will be done  
Live in my flesh by Your Spirit holy  
Till Your kingdom comes

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## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:

**PRAY** - give thanks for encouraging news about successful vaccine trials and pray for a good take-up from people in Scotland as the vaccination plan is rolled out.

Pray for wisdom for Governments to interpret health statistics and take appropriate action, for wisdom for businesses to operate safely and for people in lockdown to behave appropriately during the Christmas period where rules are relaxed a little.

Continue to pray for NHS staff of all kinds, as they have to cope with ever increasing numbers of COVID -19 patients in addition to winter viruses. Social Services, Staff processing benefits claims, Key workers keeping essential services going, Loved ones, those in fear and isolation, those in need of healing, those concerned about their jobs, those in financial stress, the bereaved, for the church – the body of Christ to be a source of help and hope bringing the peace of Christ into a fearful world.

Pray for those in our church family who are ill, bereaved or in need in some other way.

Pray for the persecuted church around the world and for countries struggling to control the pandemic. Pray for countries, where there is a humanitarian crisis.

Pray for the President-elect in the USA and acceptance by the outgoing President.



### Closing Song:: Shine, Jesus, shine <https://youtu.be/gi1Ubff5XoY>

Lord, the light of your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness, shining  
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth you now bring  
us  
Shine on me, shine on me

*Shine, Jesus, shine  
Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze  
Set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow  
Flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth your word  
Lord, and let there be light*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence  
From the shadows into your radiance

By the blood I may enter your  
brightness  
Search me, try me, consume all my  
darkness  
Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on your kingly brightness  
So our faces display your likeness  
Ever changing from glory to glory  
Mirrored here may our lives tell your  
story  
Shine on me, shine on me

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**Closing prayer:** *“Thank You, Father, for Your presence here with us. Thank you for sending Jesus to be physically with us on the earth for a short time, to bring heavenly light and life for all mankind. Thank You that by the power of the Holy Spirit we have the light of Jesus living within each of us. Help us as we go from here today to reflect that light and bring hope into the lives of the people You call us to be with. Amen.”*

**Blessing:** *“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen.”*