

Christmas Day 2020

John 1: 1-14

It is always lovely to read those opening verses of the Gospel according to John. John is often depicted as an eagle, an animal renowned for its piercing gaze, and in John's gospel is known for exploring and celebrating the eternal mysteries and eternal truths and the very mind of God.

And surprisingly for a set text for Christmas, John's gospel completely ignores the birth of Jesus. Instead we get great themes of 'the word' and 'the light' in the opening verses.

To the original listeners of John's gospel they would have understood the Greek word 'logos' or 'the word' to mean both word and also reason, and to understand that logos meant the mind of God. The word is therefore much more than an uttered word; it also signified that the word had power, energy, and an effect. John wishes to understand that Jesus is none other than God's creative energy that is life-giving and light-giving, energy that came to earth in human and bodily form.

Today, in the sort of northern-hemisphere darkness that seems so deep and penetrating at this time of the solstice, incidentally when the sunrise time stays stubbornly the same for another week and sunset only gets later by about a minute over the week – I want to focus on John calling Jesus the light.

I don't know if you ever notice the phenomenon of lighting a candle, that with a taper that is lit and is used to light other candles, the light might be shared as the first candle is lit, but it doesn't diminish the light of the taper. The second flame adds to the light. And so on, as

other candles are lit, it brings with it additional light, the original taper's light is not diminished.

At Taizé, at their evening service at the end of the week, a single candle is lit from the altar candle. Everyone in the church, and it can be up to about 7,000 people, has a candle, and from that first candle other small, seemingly insignificant candles are lit, and those candles light other seemingly insignificant candles of those close to them. And so on, the light grows rapidly throughout the whole church. I found it a most profound moment, and moved me to tears. The power of the light from that one seemingly insignificant candle, to offer light to another, and so on, so that in a very short period of time the whole church was brightly lit by 7,000 candles!

So today, I invite you to consider yourself as a candle....

A candle that does not diminish in brightness as it chooses to share that light with someone else....

A candle who shines light in to darkness, a light that can reveal God's love...

A candle that can banish the darkness from someone's life, and still be the same light afterwards...

And what is it that makes us a light that can shine into other people's lives? It isn't complex really. Our most recent example is the wonderful people who knitted about 400 Christmas angels. A simple act of generosity. Those angels have brightened the lives of so many other people in Penicuik, and enabled the message of hope, peace, joy and love to be spread throughout our local community.

Today, Jesus, the light of the world, is born. You have a choice. Do you accept his guiding light, a light of hope, love, peace, grace and mercy? And in receiving that light, do you commit to becoming a light of Christ?

I ask you to reflect on the power of Christ's light, and how you may be called, in your life, in your context, in this coming year, when the memories of a peaceful Christmas have long evaporated in the day to day busyness of life, to be a light to others?

As we hear this most beautiful gospel proclaim that Jesus the light is more powerful than any darkness, how can we use the light we have received from Jesus, to shine light into the lives of others?

And for ourselves, what do you pray that 'Jesus the light' will do in your life this Christmas Day?

John tells us that Jesus was the light of the world, and all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.

As children of God, I pray that Jesus, the light of the world, answers your prayers for light this Christmas time and that you will be a light to others. May you receive Christ's light and peace. May you share it with all those who have struggled this last year and are in darkness.