



Light in the Darkness

Even down-under, where the days are growing longer and hotter, we find ourselves drawn to the imagery of candles as Christmas approaches. That's because light shining in darkness is a powerful picture of what Christmas can mean for us.

One of the four New Testament accounts of Jesus life, the gospel of John, doesn't begin with the events of Christmas. There's no Joseph and Mary, no baby, no shepherds and certainly no donkey. Instead, the gospel begins with a profound meditation and reflection on the significance of these events and how they fit into God's purposes for humanity and the whole of creation:

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 humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The Word here is Jesus, the beloved Son who experienced perfect fellowship with His Heavenly Father for all eternity. Although he is the one through whom all things were made, he chooses to enter into our world, like an author writing themselves into their own novel.

And when he comes – as a baby, a baby who will grow up to become a teenager and eventually a man – the light shines in the darkness.

Darkness which is more than the sun slipping beneath the horizon. This is the darkness of sin and evil, the darkness which wounds precious people and damages our beautiful world. It's the darkness that both expresses and arises from our estrangement from God, the source of all light and life.

And it's into that darkness that Jesus shines his light. The light of a life lived as it should be – with love towards God and people, without hypocrisy or pretence. The light of a life laid down in sacrifice so that all who trust in Him might know God forever.

May each encounter with a candle this season remind us of the light and love and hope that Jesus Christ gifts to all who come to him.

Bishop Mark