



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 21st December 2025

compiled by Rev. Melvyn Cooke

Call to Worship

As we gather, we get ready,
We get ready for the coming season,
We get ready to celebrate Jesus,
We get ready to meet Jesus again,
As we gather, we get ready.

Hymn 175 Light of the world

1] 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.

*So 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.*

2] King of all days
Oh, so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above .
Humbly You came
To the earth You created,
All for love's sake became poor.

So here I am to worship,

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

So here I am to worship,

Tim Hughes (b. 1977)

Prayer

As your World grows in darkness,
As your people are surrounded by darkness
As memories are filled with darkness
As pain and hurt remind us of darkness
Lord, shine your light this advent.

Reading John 1: 1 - 14

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.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

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.

Hymn 176

1] Like a candle flame,
Flickering small in our darkness.
Uncreated light
Shines through infant.

God is with us, alleluia.

God is with us, alleluia.

Come to save us, alleluia.

Come to save us, alleluia.

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

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

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Reflection

My street has been a mini version of the Blackpool illuminations since the beginning of December. My neighbours have seriously taken to heart the idea of “shining a light” – not for Jesus, but at the very least to bring some fun and brightness into these dark days. Like many streets in the UK, we have very low-level street lighting at nighttime during the year, but in this month, the street has come alive with twinkling icicles, reindeer, candy canes, and various assortments of other Christmas associated characters, all glowing brightly in the night. It became so serious this year that several of my neighbours clubbed together to hire a cherry picker to enable them to light the front of the houses from the roof tops!

Isaiah at the commencement of his narrative concerning the coming of the Messiah, says, “*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of great darkness a light has dawned.*”

The effects of darkness on many people are quite profound, for many when darkness falls it is a scary time, fear can grip the mind, afraid to venture out, for some failing eyesight and frailty of body, all means that the hours of darkness can leave one feeling vulnerable. How many of us when the nighttime falls, our minds can be overwhelmed with the anxieties of the day, or concern for the future.

It was Thomas Fuller who coined the phrase, “it is always darkest just before the dawn.” He wrote this sentiment in a book, a travelogue of his journey around the Holy Land, and he wrote these words in relation to the account in the book of Deuteronomy of Moses ascending, from the plains of Moab to the top of Mount Nebo, in order to see the Promised land, just before his death. This mountain is also referred to as Mount Pisgah in Hebrew, meaning literally meaning the Summit.

I am by no means an expert on climbing mountains, but from my limited experience of climbing hills, I know that to reach the summit takes, energy, determination and stamina, all of which cost one physically, and for many emotionally. I have read and listened to enough mountaineers who have conquered the heights to know that for all, at some point there comes a moment when it all feels too much, when the end goal seems

beyond reach, but that this moment passes into insignificance when the summit is reached and the view from the top is viewed.

Perhaps as you read this reflection, life seems full of darkness, fears and anxieties for what your tomorrow holds. It could be that your landscape is dominated with concerns about family, finance, employment or lack of it. My prayer is that as you persevere to reach the summit, may your testimony be that of the Psalmist, who, faced with overwhelming odds writes in Psalm 18: 28 *You have turned on my light! The Lord my God has made my darkness turn to light. Now in your strength I can scale any wall, attack any troop.* John also reminds us in his prologue to the Gospel, *The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world, referring of course to Jesus*, and John reminds us that Jesus was and is and is to come.

However dark your world might seem now, it is not that the dawn is coming, but that the light is here.

Prayers

Heavenly Father, we are not altogether convinced that darkness is a thing of the past. Many people in this world of ours feel their world is one of darkness and gloom. Pressures crowd in upon us and get us down.

The causes are varied: bereavement, illness, money, worries about family, trouble at work or not having work, drugs, drink, boredom, doubt, weariness, futility.

Then there are the world issues: war, poverty, climate change, disease, unfair trade and so on. It does not help when we feel that as Christians, we should be doing so much better than we are. Gracious and loving God, we rejoice that you are with us in our troubles, you know us, and you love us – always.

Even though we have made a mess of things personally and collectively you remain faithful. We rejoice that your Son came not to a perfect world, but to a broken world, our world. To bring light to the darkness, our darkness.

We pray for our dark and dreary world, a world in need – in need not just of a technical fix, but in need of love and grace, forgiveness and new life, hope, peace and fellowship, in need of renewal, in need of YOU.

We pray that you would come alongside us and all those for whom we pray, that you would show us Jesus, the light of the world, the one who came (and who comes) to rid us of sin, to give us life and health and peace, peace that passes all understanding – not a temporary respite from trouble but the strength to overcome it and ultimately to receive life eternal.

You don't wave a magic wand for everything to be sorted instantly – you require us to exercise our faith and to respond to your call to preach the gospel and to seek to live it out, to look to you for the strength that we need to share your love and grace. Help us to share the good news in word and action – the same good news that the fishermen were called to proclaim that there is a Saviour, a merciful king who loves us and whom we can love and adore.

We have been set free. Enable us to use our freedom to share in bringing in the kingdom. In the light of this we have something to celebrate, something to shout about – for even in our trouble and pain, even in our loss, we know that Jesus is with us.

Hear us as in a moment of silence we pray for those in darkness (of whatever kind) – let us pray that they may see and know the light of Christ:

Silence

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Hear our prayers, Lord, spoken and unspoken and answer them for Jesus' sake. Amen

written by Rev. Ian McLean

Song

1] Wonderful Counselor, mighty God among us;
Everlasting Father, Prince who rules in peace.
To us a Child is born, to us a Son is giv'n,
to those who walked in darkness,
the light has come.

2] Son of God, Son of Man, Word of God incarnate;
Suffering Savior, glor'ous risen Lord.
For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son;
no more we walk in darkness,
the light has come.

3] King of kings, Lord of lords, Son of God exalted;
Name above ev'ry name, Lamb upon the throne.
This King will come again, the Father's only Son;
no more a world in darkness,
the light will come.

Chick Yuill

Blessing

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in our hearts
and fill your lives with his joy and peace. **Amen**

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