

Sunday 30th November 2025 – Advent 1: ‘The Light of God’s Wisdom’ (Isaiah 2:1-5, Eph 5:8-14)

Some years ago, at about this time of year, I was away with some friends and we decided to go for an afternoon walk in the woods. It was an area we didn’t know well, and like typical blokes we thought we could just wing it and find our way. It was a big, fairly dense wood and... you know what’s coming – we got lost. And we’d not really thought through that it also starts getting dark about 4.30. So, when it became fairly obvious that we were stuck in the middle of this large wood, and it was now basically dark, we eventually pooled resources.

Of course, none of us had brought a torch – but we did have phones. Then we discovered that of the 5 of us, 2 hadn’t bothered to bring one on the walk, and 2 more had run out of charge. All we had was my little Nokia brick phone [chime] – at this stage I was still resisting the smart phone revolution, so all my mates with their iPhones were now reliant on the little tiny torch from my little tiny phone. You could basically see about 6-8 feet in front of you – but if you ever had a Nokia brick you may remember that their battery is really good (the phone doesn’t really do anything, so the charge lasts forever). This little torch held its own for about an hour as we trudged away in the darkness, frequently stepping into muddy puddles and hoping that we were vaguely heading towards our accommodation. It was only a tiny little light, but it was enough – in a pitch dark forest even a little light makes all the difference.

An hour later, streaked with mud and rain we stumbled onto the road which we thought it best to follow, even though we had no idea which road it was. But finally, twenty or so minutes later, we rounded a bend... and the drive to the house hove into view. We opened the front door, dirty and weary, but immensely happy to find ourselves bathed in light. It was only a bulb in the hallway, but after two hours of almost total darkness, it might have been the glory of heaven.

Today marks the start of Advent, that wonderful season when we get ready for Jesus’ coming into the world – the True Light that gives light to everyone. And to mark Advent this year, over the next 4 Sundays we’ll be thinking about this theme of light, of Jesus as the Light of the world.

Because the good news is that the Light is coming. But light is a very rich image – light blesses us in all kinds of ways. What does it *mean in practice* for Jesus to be our light? So, we’ll be looking at light in four different ways, using four amazing passages from the great prophet Isaiah. Next week we’ll be thinking about the light of God’s presence with us – as we have our special Christingle service. Then we’ll think about the light of God’s justice – shining into all the dark places of our world. On the last Sunday before Christmas we’ll think about the light of God’s joy.

But today we begin with the light of God’s wisdom – and this lovely text from Isaiah chapter 2: (v5) ‘Come let us walk in the light of the Lord.’ The image here is a very simple one, isn’t it – **when it’s dark, we need light to show us the way.** Just like that little phone helped guide us through the dark forest – we need light to show us the way. Hopefully a lot more than that little Nokia torch!

And Jesus is that light – he calls himself that Light of the World. But if Jesus is the light, *how* do we walk in that light? Isaiah 2 gives us a very important clue: (v3) ‘The Lord will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ **To walk in the light we need wisdom – we need to know God’s ways – and Jesus supremely shows us that.** John’s gospel is the gospel where we find this idea of Jesus as the Light most fully explored – but it’s significant that John doesn’t just call Jesus the Light, in the same passage he calls Jesus the *Logos* – which means the Word, the message. The Logos is the Light.

Jesus is the smartest person who ever lived, the greatest teacher of them all. His teaching has more wisdom than anyone else's. Even most people who don't believe in Jesus agree that he taught amazing things that no-one else did. And back in the days of Isaiah more than 2,500 years ago, the prophet understood that if people really understood this then the world would radically change. Disputes would be resolved, wars would end. Greed would become generosity, selfishness would become serving – this message would be so good that all nations would stream towards this light to find out the key to life.

This light is there for everyone – but it's an active image this, isn't it – we need to walk in it. 'Find out what pleases the Lord,' is St Paul's way of putting it in our other reading, as he describes what it means to live as children of light. You could say that investing in our faith, learning Jesus' ways, is the equivalent of charging our phone battery so that we can keep walking in the light. We're just starting to put together some big plans for the new year, really exciting plans to help us all learn those ways. I can't say too much yet, I'll be able to share more in a couple of weeks – but we're going to be focusing bigtime on what it means to walk in Jesus' ways, in Jesus' light in 2026. Watch this space!

At this point I want to say that I don't want to push the phone battery image too far – I don't want to suggest that Jesus' light is variable – **Jesus' light is constant, beautiful and pure... but it doesn't stay still – it moves**. During my sabbatical one of the things I did was re-read all the Chronicles of Narnia. I haven't done that for 40 years, and I had the time, so it was a little trip down memory lane. And one of those lines that crops up repeatedly in all of CS Lewis' famous stories is this: Aslan is on the move. Aslan the Lion is the Jesus figure in the story and one thing Lewis captures brilliantly is how dynamic Aslan is: whenever something significant is about to happen... Aslan is on the move.

Jesus is always on the move – the Jesus who moved from heaven into our world, who moved from Bethlehem to Egypt, and from Egypt to Nazareth as a child, who as an adult moved around Galilee, to Jerusalem, to the cross, to the tomb, to the resurrection and back to Galilee and then to heaven again forever, is the God who is on the move. And Jesus is still on the move. We're seeing it at the moment. There's a lot of talk about this thing called the Quiet Revival – how many more people are suddenly coming to faith and connecting with church and wanting to find out how to really live an abundant life. And it's totally a God thing – **Aslan is on the move! The light is moving – we need to keep walking in the light, taking that light out into the world.**

And that's the point isn't it. The final very obvious thing to say about this image today is that the purpose of light is to shine in the darkness. **We need to walk in the light because all around us is dark**. And we need to acknowledge that at the moment, the dark is getting darker.

It's getting darker across the world, it's getting darker here in our angry, discontented nation. It's also getting darker in our culture. Those of you who know me well know that I usually throw in a musical reference to my talks, so here's mine for today. One of my favourite bands, especially as a young man, is a band called Blur, and their second album way back in 1992 was called Modern Life is Rubbish. It seemed a bit po-faced at the time – but 30+ years later I think perhaps a lot more people might agree with them.

We've been harnessing the power of technology for several centuries to create a perfect society without God, and we're kind of nearing the summit – tech can do almost anything for us now, even think for us; but we've realised that there's one thing it can't do – it doesn't make us happy. And for many of us the penny's dropped: we want to rediscover an ancient way of life that *really* works, which rests on timeless, eternal wisdom. And when the Light comes into the world, this light says to all who are willing to listen: 'Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Learn from me because I am gentle and humble in heart. My yoke is easy and my burden is light.' No wonder people are flocking back to our churches – *who wouldn't?*

The darker it is, the brighter the light shines. And **my very simple take on this Quiet Revival is this: as the dark is getting darker, the light is shining brighter.** And I wish I could say that you can have the latter without the former, but I'm not sure you can – that's a deep discussion for another day. But what I do know is that the light is shining brighter for many people now. The light of God's wisdom. The true light that gives light to everyone. And as we use this Advent season to prepare, let's get ready, once again, for this glorious, eternal, life-giving light which comes into the world.

One last thought as I close. You might feel that your light isn't very bright. Maybe a bit like that Nokia brick phone – what sort of use is that in our big dark world? But let me leave you today with an image which may help. Remember that the light *moves*, it moves with us – if we know Jesus, then it moves in us, we take it wherever we go. It's good to think of buildings like this as lighthouses – and that's true, I hope this lighthouse shines brightly. But it's a static image, isn't it? The great news is that, at the end of every service, we leave this lighthouse, and we take our light – Jesus' light – with us.

Now take a moment to imagine this – look around you at all the people here. Each of you is a little light. Now imagine as you leave that each of you – all little lights – is walking back home. Picture it – golden threads of light spreading out from this building – *some will go...* [] Shut your eyes and think of it – all these moving rays of light – and every time you turn a corner, so the light goes with you. Little by little, all of us together create a glorious web of light.

But let's not stop there. *Now* imagine all the other churches in this area doing the same [] – hundreds and hundreds of people, hundreds of little threads of light – and then zoom out a bit and think of the thousands of threads in MK, all criss-crossing. Now the UK... Now Europe... Now the world. **One vast web of light in the darkness. You've heard of the World Wide Web – this is the Word Wide Web** – the Word, the Logos who is the Light of the World. Who says your little light doesn't make a difference?

Come, people of God, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Amen.