

The Story of Light

In the beginning, at the start of everything, the earth was formless and dark. There was nothing but deep, deep blackness. Then, God said, 'Let there be light!' And there was light, and it was good. And so the world was changed forever, as that first light of creation burst forth in dazzling splendour.

Time passed. Darkness and light danced together, as the world turned and spun. People were born, and as they grew they knew within themselves both the darkness and light, in their corruption, and their love. Empires rose and empires fell. Nations learned new things, and then were forgotten into dust. Kindness and hatred intermingled in human souls, and often we kept our hearts hidden away, preferring to look after ourselves rather than others. We forgot what God wanted, that he had asked us just to love.

So God said to Godself, 'they need some more light'. And so into the world he sent his own Son, the holder of light itself. The glory of heaven spilled over into our sky, as angels sang and the Christmas star shone. And then, in the ordinary humdrum of another baby born, the people who walked in darkness saw a great light dawn. And that light was a light of revelation and

change. It was so bright and so wide that the darkness could not overcome it.

Now this baby grew up, with God's light in his heart. His cousin, John the Baptist, knew what this light meant, and prepared the way for his coming. John was like the glow of sunrise telling us that the full sun of a new day is on the horizon. So he testified to the coming of this baby, now a man, with God's light burning bright in his heart. John told us, 'watch out, change your ways, leave the darkness behind. Let your souls be a place where God's light can reside'.

For when we let go of ourselves, and care for others instead, we allow God's light to fill us. This is what John explained we must do.

Then Jesus came, doing incredible things: blind eyes were opened, deaf ears heard first sounds, the crippled ran, and the dead rose; his light was unstoppable, a blaze which drew people towards God. Jesus showed us what it is like to put yourself last, and perhaps for the first time, through his brightness we saw that To Love God, and Love your Neighbour, encompasses all that there is. And Jesus explained: 'I am the light of the world. Through me you can see God.'

And then Jesus said 'Let *your* light shine before others'. Because each of us has the ability to shine, to draw people towards God with our own actions and words. What Jesus taught is that what really matters is kindness, and justice. For there will always be people around us who are struggling, whose lives are harder than ours. But it is in our power to be a light in that darkness.

We all know that we are drawn towards people who radiate kindness, who have genuine love and concern even for strangers. We are drawn towards the light of love, like moths to a candle. So we must be one of those people.

We can give to the foodbank, we can offer friendship to someone lonely, we can volunteer at the Night Shelter, we can support charities, we can pray for others, we look after our friends when they need us, we can invite people to Alpha, to church, to a carol service, we can forgive, we can be thankful, we can be generous. We can ask someone the question, 'Did you know you are loved?' We can be brave enough to not put ourselves first, but to care for those around us whose lives are darker than our own. In all these ways, we bring light - a triumphant echo of the light brought by the birth of a baby at Christmas.

The challenge is the question: do you let your light shine? If someone looked at your life, would they see anything of God?

For to Love God, and Love our Neighbour - this is all that there is in the world to be done, and if it was done by everyone, earth would be transformed into heaven, and would shine with God's marvellous light.

Now it is not Christmas yet, and we still wait in the dark. We are still on our journey, looking ahead for the light we know is coming. The light that will change everything. The brightness of God's love poured out, from Father, to Son, then through the Spirit to us.

So go, as we travel through Advent together. Take your light, take your small starry spark of the divine. Go, knowing that in the ordinariness of another baby born, the pure love of God in all its brilliance dawned. It is our calling, our joy, our gift, to shine with this brightness even in the darkest place, through our own words and actions. We carry the flame of Christ's light in our hearts. So let your light shine!

Amen.