

SUNDAY 5 JULY 2020

## JESUS: IN HIS OWN WORDS

'I am the light of the world'

*Lord I come to your awesome presence,  
from the shadows into your radiance.  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness.*

As I come into God's presence, I choose to praise him in the words of Psalm 108:1–5.

- <sup>1</sup> My heart is steadfast, O God;  
I will sing and make melody.  
    Awake, my soul!
- <sup>2</sup> Awake, O harp and lyre!  
I will awake the dawn.
- <sup>3</sup> I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples,  
and I will sing praises to you among the nations.
- <sup>4</sup> For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens,  
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
- <sup>5</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,  
and let your glory be over all the earth.

From beginning to end, the Bible is soaked in the imagery of light. Light is the first recorded creative act of God, and his first words recorded in Scripture: "Let there be light!" (Genesis 1:3) And at the end of the story God obliterates the last vestiges of darkness: there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light. (Revelation 22:5) Between these two great visions stands Jesus, who makes a staggering claim.

Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

'I am the light of the world' recalls the statement at the beginning of John's gospel: "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:4–5). Jesus claimed to be not only the inexhaustible source of spiritual nourishment (the bread of life), but that he was also the genuine light by which truth and falsehood could be distinguished and by which the people who walk in darkness should find their way (see Isaiah 9:2).

Light, together with life, are signs of God's presence with his people, and of his relationship with them. Like the cloudy, fiery pillar in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21), the light revealed in Jesus makes the path ahead clear and reminds us that God is with us, even in the dark and empty places, like the night or the wilderness. In Jesus we experience the light of God, revealing himself, the world around us and our way through its many twists and turns. But this is not just a light shining from afar, like the beam of a distant lighthouse. It is close at hand, making the journey with us.

We pause and pray for those known to us who, for one reason or another, will today walk in darkness. We pray that their way will not only be illuminated but that they will also know the presence of the one who is the source of that light.

*Pause and pray*

The second half of Jesus' claim makes it clear that Jesus, the light of the world, is offering to the world two choices: to follow Jesus and have 'the light of life' or to walk in darkness. 'Follow' is the language of discipleship (see, eg, John 1:37–38, 40, 43), and involves the daily activity of denying ourselves, taking up our cross and going wherever Jesus leads (Luke 9:23).

In these dark times we respond again to the call of God, reminding ourselves of the words of Paul to the church in Corinth:

For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

We pray for the grace to follow, to walk in the light (1 John 1:7).

*Pause and pray*

*In all my thoughts, may I think of you;  
In all my words, may I speak of you;  
In all my actions, may I act as you;  
In all my interactions, may I love like you;  
In everything, may I look like you,  
More and more each day.  
Amen.*