



**ST JAMES' CHURCH, ISLINGTON N1 8PH**  
**7 February 2021 2 b LENT Year B 21/6**

**Readers:** Martin Allen, Nick Fryer and Norah Hodge  
**Interceder:** Jane Kilgannon  
**Cantor:** Ros Ford  
**AV editor:** Adam Dickson  
**Opening Music:** *Hail Gladdening light Wood*  
**Anthem:** *I owe my Lord John Bell*  
**Hymns:** AM112 New light has dawned  
 TP2 All earth was dark  
 AM725 Make me a channel

**Collect:** God of all tenderness, from the very beginning you have led your people into fresh and challenging places. Renew your Church with wisdom and with love so that, leaving behind the sins of the past, we may follow in the direction of your one eternal light, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

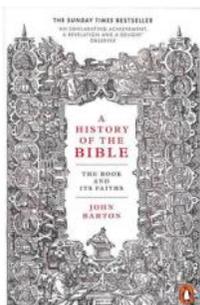
I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.  
 - John 12:46 -

**A SECOND CRACK AT THE LIGHT** For the all age Candlemass service last Sunday we looked at the various candles that we use in Church from the Easter pillar by the font to the small votive prayer candles in the Blessed Sacrament chapel. This week we look at the various ways the word 'light' is used in the Bible - some very familiar and others a bit more obscure! The aim, of course, is to find out how close we are to God's light...

**SUNDAY SCHOOL CRAFTS** Those of you involved in 'home schooling' will know only too well just how much work is involved in preparing materials for our young children, making sure they are stimulating and fun - and educational. Throughout the lockdowns Maria and Sinead have been working incredibly hard.

In the first three months they were preparing envelopes full of crafts for 40 children; more recently that has slimmed down to a more manageable 21. But it is still at least half a day's work to get it all together - and they both work full time! With no idea of how long the current lock-down will last we need to have a bit of a review of what is possible long term. Two things we are agreed on: we don't just want to download a picture off the internet for the children to colour in; nor do we feel it right only to send out materials for those children who are (ordinarily) in Sunday School every week. But it may not be possible to continue as we are until the summer. Please let us know what you would find most helpful.

**LENT 2021** Suddenly Lent is just around the corner! At the last PCC meeting on 18th January I asked if anyone would like to take part in some Lenten discussions based on a book - using Zoom as the easiest way of meeting up together? Several people thought it was worth trying and the book that was recommended was John Barton's 630 page 'History of the Bible'. I have a copy on order and would like to suggest that that we have three sessions (ie once a fortnight), based on a theme from the book. They would be in the weeks beginning February 22nd, March 8th and March 22nd. Anyone is welcome to take part; more books can be ordered (£10.50). Let me know if you are interested.



**SORRY YOU ARE LEAVING** The amount of admin a Church has to cope with these days is no laughing matter and I was very relieved when the PCC agreed to appoint Adam Dickson to the role of Administrator over three years ago. Until the pandemic he was located in the Parish Office in the Vicarage basement and was chiefly responsible for Hall bookings, taking the Minutes for PCC meetings, dealing with all the requests for information the Diocese keeps sending and supporting the two Treasurers.

Recently he has also taken on the task of editing the recorded Sunday services. But Adam has now secured a full time job as a Data scientist and given a month's notice. We are very grateful for what he has done but there are going to be some substantial admin. gaps as the pandemic comes to an end especially as we resume taking bookings for the Hall. The Standing Committee will convene shortly but if anyone knows of a reliable person looking for part-time admin work and/or someone with technical skills who can help us to commission the new web-cams we would be very glad to hear. The good news is that Adam will continue to be our organist.

**OPEN CHURCH** Two new enquiries from people who have been coming into Church regularly during the lockdown: one is asking about Evening Prayer and the other about getting baptised...

**THIS WEEK**  
 Sun 2nd SUNDAY BEFORE LENT Streamed 'Service of the Word' at 10am.  
 Tues 10-5pm CT webinar on preparing for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.  
 Wed 12.30pm Funeral of Ken Akers, Enfield Crematorium. 6pm Grace Church, Alvin, Texas: zoom prayers.  
 Sun 14 SUNDAY BEFORE LENT Streamed 'Service of the Word' at 10am.

Calendar and Daily Prayer themes

Sun 7 2 b LENT Paula, Gianni and Giandre Morrison; Isabel Nisbet  
 Mon 8 DEL Wk 5 Joyce Owusu; Toni Parker; Jessica and Tayah Phillips  
 Tues 9 Feria Nick, Matilda and Barnaby Powell; Rosemary Ross  
 Wed 10 Feria John, Hilary and Laura Roden and Hope Dixey; Helen Schofield  
 Thurs 11 Feria Sam, Joe, Charlie and Isla Seabrook; Susan and Eric Sorensen  
 Fri 12 Feria Nick, Isabelle, Maxwell and Leon Sharples; Vera Taggart  
 Sat 13 Feria Claire, Alex, Kaitlin and Oliver Suksiri; Fr Stephen Taylor  
 Sun 14 2 b LENT Ken and Margaret Thompson; Fr Victor de Waal

**PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome**

**BIRTHDAYS** Many Happy Returns on Tuesday to Amy Eldon-Richier who featured with her family in last Sunday's on-line 'Service of the Word' as the mother of new baby Callum; on Friday to Max Rudkin who will be 13 and on Friday to Gianni Esprit who will be 15. Happy days all.

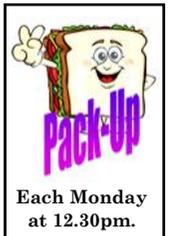
**SICK** Christopher Browne, Jennifer Franich, Mariolina and Peter Freeth, Emily Grainger, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Vera Taggart, Lyn Thompson, Geoff Turner and Melanie Toogood.

**DEPARTED** We pray for the soul of Ken Akers (Cruden Street), to be laid to rest on Wednesday at Enfield Crematorium.

**ANNIVERSARIES** 7th: Fr George Haynes (St John's, Duncan Terrace); 8th: Leonard Baugh, Nellie Chapman, Henry Miller, Bernard Barton (2004); Fr Geoffrey Marlow, former Vicar of St James (2008); 11th: Hesta Lo, Suki Plowright (2001); 12th: Ivy Weston (2013), Josie McGovern (2020).

**INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS** In the US: Suzanne Smith, Rector of Grace Church, Alvin, Texas. Suzanne's husband Travis is Rector of Holy Comforter, Angleton, 14 miles away. Japan: Fr Sebastian and Yuki Naniwa serving in Ehime near Hiroshima.

**PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE** Our prayers continue for Nazanin Zaghari Radcliffe in the hope that some kind of formula can allow her to return to the UK as soon as possible.





SERVICE OF THE  
WORD  
For the 2nd Sunday  
before Lent  
Sunday February 7th 2021  
  
as streamed from  
St James' Church  
Islington N1

## SERVICE OF THE WORD FOR 2 before LENT

Entry Music: *Hail gladdening Light* Charles Wood  
*Choir of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge* Director: Geoffrey Webber

### Introduction

Welcome to St James' Church, Islington, for this Service of the Word for the Second Sunday before Lent

Last Sunday we took the iPad around the Church looking at our candles - where they are set and what they mean. We celebrated Jesus' Presentation in the Temple and, in virtual form, encouraged four sets of parents to present their new children to the rest of the community here.

Today we carry on with the theme of 'light' but instead of dashing around the Old and New Testaments as we sometimes do, looking for links, I want to give some time to the three set readings that Martin, Nick and Norah are going to read for us. We have time today and I hope that you will allow yourself to engage with them, slowly and thoughtfully so that they help us to deepen our trust in God as we grow into 'children of light'. This really is one of the days when it might be helpful to open the file noted on the St James' Facebook page if you can, so that you have the words in front of you.

But now, in the light of Christ, let us call to mind the presence of God - wherever we are - thanking him for all that he has given us this week; thanking him too for the fellowship of the Church which links us not just with other members of St James' but also with our fellow Christians around the world and with all who look to Christ our light.

We start with our Collect for this the second Sunday before Lent:

**God of all tenderness, from the very beginning you have led your people into fresh and challenging places. Renew your Church with wisdom and with love so that, leaving behind the sins of the past, we may follow in the direction of your one eternal light, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### The Word of God

*1st Reading:* (Isaiah 60: 1-5, 18-20) Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall rejoice.

The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

Your sun shall no more go down, or the moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

*Gradual Hymn:* **AM 112 New light has dawned**

[t AM394 Woodlands]

***New light has dawned, the Son of God is here,  
a holy light no earthly light outshines;  
the light has dawned, the light that casts out fear,  
the light that evil dreads and love defines.***

***O Christ, the light who came to us on earth,  
shine through the shadow cast by human sin;  
renew the faith you gave at our new birth,  
destroy the dark and let your light come in.***

(Words: Paul Wigmore)

*2nd Reading:* (2 Corinthians 4: 1-6) Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. 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.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

*Gospel Acclamation:*

**Alleluia. Alleluia. The Lord has sent me to give Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives. Alleluia.**

## Gospel

A Reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

(St Matthew 5: 13-16) Jesus said, 'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under-foot.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven'.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

I wrote this sermon on Friday morning. Thursday, if you remember, was grey and wet - but on Friday the skies were blue; there was even a bit of warmth in the sunshine and people stopped to talk (at least at a distance!) as they walked in the streets.

There is no doubt that we are deeply affected by the weather, by the lack of sunshine ... and by too much rain! And that's not just Maria Flavius' longing for those wonderfully sunny Caribbean days! My aunt used to complain of feeling SAD and the experts say that without enough exposure to the sun our serotonin levels drop and that can lead to a form of depression, sometimes called Seasonal Affective Disorder. Chasing the sun on holiday as many like to do has real health benefits. And we pray that will happen this year even if we don't know when!

So the thread throughout the Bible which focuses on light and warmth is not a million miles away from our daily preoccupation with the weather, but of course it takes us in new directions too.

Today's 1st reading comes from one of the longest books in the Old Testament, from the Prophecy of Isaiah - which is really three books all rolled into one as the political events that lie behind the story happened over more than three life times not just one.

By the time today's passage was written, Isaiah of Jerusalem was long since dead and the people of Israel had returned from exile in Babylon. It was time for a new generation of disciples to pick up the original Isaiah's ideas - less focused on the past, on the exile away from Israel - and more focused on themes like 'what is God like?' and 'what is he choosing to do with us now?'

By Chapter 60 and with the people all safely back home, the writer goes to town on what it felt like to be back in their home city of Jerusalem.

It was if the streets were paved with gold, so happy were they to be back where they belonged. Everything was returning to normal: the Temple and its priests were there; trade was flourishing and foreign kings were everywhere because Jerusalem was now 'the smart place to be'. Expensively rebuilt and refurbished after the Babylonian exile, the city was simply dazzling and the fact that in that part of the world there is almost no dawn and no dusk - the blackness of night literally switches into the bright daylight in no time at all - only added to the sense of this being a very special place.

Even those connected with Abraham who lived in the southernmost part of the Arabian peninsular were coming to Jerusalem, trying to reconnect with their roots and their great ancestor. *Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*

But it is the next bit that is interesting. *The sun shall no longer be your light by day nor the moon give light to you by night...* What is Isaiah getting at here?

And the answer is that Isaiah wants his readers to rise above the ordinary and the purely natural, the regular rising of the sun in the morning and the coming out of the moon at night; instead of worrying about grey skies or whether it is raining, Isaiah says it is the presence of God that really matters. He is infinitely more beneficial to our spiritual wellbeing than any of these things. *Your sun shall no more go down, or the moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.*

Forget the weather, Isaiah says - the sun, or the lack of it - our relationship with God is what boosts our wellbeing; it is he who prevents us from getting sad. We have his power, his spirit within us to handle all the darkness that life throw at us.

In Jesus' words in the Gospel, we can go even further: God's brilliance won't just transform Jerusalem from a minor backwater into a buzzing international centre, God's light can turn each of us outwards into 'lights for the world' too - people who radiate goodness just as Jerusalem was to be an eternal symbol of peace and goodness on the international stage.

Just as the sun in the sky gives us the serotonin we need to 'feel good', so the light that God gives by his Spirit will enable us to go out there and transform the world. That is the thread of the argument.

But does it work? Even if we believe in the transforming power of God with our heads, is it that easy in practice? For many of us the grey clouds (whatever form they take) can seem overwhelming, especially in these days of lockdown when we can't get out or spend time with the friends and family able to lift our spirits.

**2nd Hymn: NMP8 All earth was dark**

***All earth was dark until you spoke,  
then all was light and all was peace.  
Yet still, O God, so many wait  
to see the flame of love released.***

***Lights to the world! O Light of man,  
kindle in us a mighty flame,  
till every hear, consumed by love,  
shall rise to praise your holy name.***

***In Christ you gave your gift of life  
to save us from the depth of night.  
O come and set our spirits free,  
and draw us to your perfect light. Lights to the world....***

(Words: J Daniels and P Thompson)

Not before time poor mental health - and the stigma attached to it - publicised by the royal princes a few years back and now the theme of a major talk by Bishop Sarah on March 23rd, is finally getting the attention it deserves. Even occasional depression is a pretty unwelcome guest but bad mood swings have become all too familiar this year. In every sense we talk of people being in a 'dark place'.

Depression comes in all shapes and sizes as we all know: as well as a general listlessness, a lack of energy, a growing uncertainty about what to do; we also get increasingly sensitive to what people do or say around us. Like the great prophet Elijah we can begin to feel very sorry for ourselves and we wonder what the future holds.

And it is into that kind of scenario that St Paul offers some advice in the second reading. He is writing to the uppity Church in Corinth, full of people who think they know best. But he knows this is mostly bravado, the *resounding gong or clanging cymbal* as he says in that famous passage in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13.

And it was all about a false attempt to try to make themselves look/feel good: the cunning of clever financial deals, the jockeying for attention, the refusal to be straightforward and honest - and in Church, the twisting of the words of the Bible to fit what they wanted to believe.

St Paul doesn't pull any punches: to use the phrase of the moment, they really had lost their 'moral compass'. They had developed a veneer of self-confidence in their own abilities that made them deaf to any appeal to listen to what God had to say: *the god of this world has blinded their minds to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

What St Paul is picking up was the fact that, in every way these people seemed to have it all. Yet for all their self confidence they weren't really happy. Outwardly they had all the answers but underneath, that was a different matter. There lay the nagging doubts, the inner yearning for something better; but how were they to find it?

With a 180 degree change of direction. He writes: *we are not to proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord - and we are to be servants to one another for his sake. When God said 'Let light shine out of darkness', it was so that he could shine in our hearts so that we could share the light of the glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Only when we let his light in could the bravado and the pathetic self-confidence be replaced by something genuine. Only by relaxing into a strength not of our own making could the depression begin to lift. But how?

Not surprisingly St Paul's advice starts with the need to be honest: with our willingness to admit that the gremlins have got to us - at least for a while.

## Affirmation of Faith

Even in lockdown I hope each of us has got someone with whom we can be that honest, someone who doesn't expect (or even want) us to put on the kind of mask designed to keep all our secrets all locked up.

The second bit of advice flows from that: a genuine honesty about our situation so that we don't fall for the temptation to find someone else to blame for how we feel. It's not fair and it rarely helps.

Third, we need to give God some time - a chunk of time if we can. *What, we might ask him, is really going on here? Am I beating myself up unnecessarily? What are the real causes for this particular problem that is making me feel so fed up?*

Those questions - and lots more like them - then become the conduits for God's grace. As we ask him for the answers we need, my experience is that the jigsaw pieces do begin to fall into place. Open to the Spirit and turning our back on easy answers, we learn to take responsibility for the things which really are down to us ... and learn to leave to one side things that we can neither change nor control.

This is the kind of 'revealing light' that holds us up, heals us and encourages us. It is this process of absorbing Christ's light that has the effect of turning us upside down and inside out: we change from being just reluctant watchers of the sunrise to being people who shine like the sunrise ourselves. As Jesus said in his Sermon to the crowds in Galilee as recorded in our Gospel, *let your light so shine in the world, that they may see your good works - and give thanks to your heavenly Father who is in heaven.*

None of us are exempt from depression and doubt. Sometimes it is relatively trivial: sometimes it is quite a formidable challenge. But Paul is right when he invites us to stop trying to deal with it in our own strength and our ability to fool other people that all is well when it isn't.

Instead, he says, welcome the light and the love that God is so eager to share with you. Replace the fog with God's own spiritual, healing, serotonin!

*Anthem:* I owe my Lord a morning song John Bell

*I owe my Lord a morning song  
for God has meant this day.  
Through fears of night and hidden light  
God moves and wills my way.*

*I owe my Lord a morning song;  
the Spirit gave me voice;  
nor did she force my soul to praise  
but honoured me with choice.*

*I owe my Lord a morning song;  
how can I help but sing  
when God is all in all, and I  
am one with everything.*

As members of the family of God we affirm our faith:

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith  
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God:  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## Confession

**God of mercy, we admit to you  
the darkness that lies within us.  
In faith and in hope we repent of our sins  
the evil we have done  
and the good we have failed to do.  
For the sake of Jesus who died for us,  
forgive us for all that is past,  
and help us to live each day  
filled with the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from all our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Creator God, who formed the sun to give all Creation the light and the warmth to enable us to live, give us we pray the light of truth and goodness and love that makes it possible not just to live but to flourish. May we shape our daily lives by the light that you share with us. it possible for us to not just live but to flourish. May we shape our daily lives by the light that you share with us.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Help us, too, to fight against the darkness that so easily overwhelms us: the temptation to selfishness and the desire to have our own way, the overlooking of the evils which corrupt our national life and the weaknesses that so easily spoil our time together as families and friends. May your light grow in our hearts and minds through prayer and our care for others.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Bring your light into those places where there is real despair: for those whose mental health is badly affected by lock-down, those in unstable and unhappy relationships, those involved in crime and violence on our estates, those awaiting trial and those in prison. We give thanks for all those who dedicate themselves to acting as counsellors and good role models.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our families and friends, those whom we cannot see as we used to and those who are sheltering. We continue to pray for our doctors and nurses, for all involved in caring for the sick and for those talking part in the inoculation programme. In a moment of quiet we remember any who especially need our prayers today...

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, Lord, we commend the souls of those who have died: for Martin Rutherford laid to rest on Thursday; for Ken Akers whose funeral is next Wednesday; and for those whose anniversaries fall this coming week: Fr George Haynes, Leonard Baugh, Nellie Chapman, Henry Miller, Bernard Barton, Fr Geoffrey Marlow, Hesta Lo, Suki Plowright, Ivy Weston and Josie McGovern. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of Mary the Mother of God, St James and all the saints, we commend ourselves and all those for whom we have prayed, to your unending love. Merciful Father:

**accept these prayers for the sake of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**May God give us his comfort and his peace,  
his light and his joy,  
in this world and in the next;  
and may the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with us, now and for ever. Amen.**

*Final Hymn: Gradual: AM725 Make me a channel*

[t St Francis]

***Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.  
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.  
O, Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled and to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love with all my soul.***

***Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness, only light,  
and where there's sadness, ever joy. O Master...***

***Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving to all that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.***

(Words: Sebastian Temple)



May God bless every £1 we give so that St James' will be here, not just for today and for tomorrow, but for the future he wants to create.