



**Call:** (Psalm 27:1-5) The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

**Hymn: STF 175 Light of the world**

**Watch on YouTube :** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmJ737MSHOE>

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;  
and You're altogether lovely,  
altogether worthy,  
altogether wonderful to me.*

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.  
*Refrain*

And I'll never know how much it  
cost  
To see my sin upon that cross.  
(Repeat)  
*Refrain*

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**Prayers:** Fearless God, how wonderful is your presence with us, as you move us from darkness to light, as you call us to cast our nets wide, as you urge us to move outwards – from sorrow to joy, from challenge to opportunity, from oppression to freedom, from gloom to glory, from fear to fulfilment.

Faithful God, your light moves outwards from you, through us, to the world. Thank you for trusting us with the ministry of sharing your light and love. Forgive us when we try and keep it to ourselves, when we are selfish, complacent and inward-looking. Help us to move outwards, so that we can make a difference and bring light to everyone.

Restorative God, your forgiveness enables us to move away from sin to service, your faithfulness allows us to move forwards and not lose heart, your generosity inspires us to take up your call, and live out your purposes here on earth.  
Amen

**Lords Prayer :** 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.

**Hymn: STF 489 All I once held dear**

**Watch on YouTube :** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpPla-BskY>

All I once held dear,  
Built my life upon,  
All this world reveres,  
And wars to own,  
All I once thought gain  
I have counted loss;  
Spent and worthless now,  
Compared to this.  
*Knowing You, Jesus,  
knowing You,  
there is no greater thing.  
You're my all, You're the best,*

*You're my joy, my righteousness,  
and I love You, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire  
Is to know You more,  
To be found in You  
And known as Yours.  
To possess by faith  
What I could not earn,  
All-surpassing gift  
Of righteousness.  
*Chorus*

Oh, to know the power  
Of Your risen life,  
And to know You in  
Your sufferings.  
To become like You  
In Your death, my Lord,  
So with You to live  
And never die.  
*Chorus*

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## Readings

**Isaiah 9:1-4** : Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future, he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

**Matthew 4: 12-23** : When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali – to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah: 'Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.' From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and illness among the people.

**Hymn: STF 495 Dear Lord and Father...**

**Watch on YouTube :** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqOnjmr9Ah0>

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
Forgive our foolish ways;  
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;  
In purer lives thy service find,  
In deeper reverence, praise.

With that deep hush subduing all  
Our words and works that drown  
The tender whisper of thy call,  
As noiseless let thy blessing fall  
As fell thy manna down.

In simple trust like theirs who heard  
Beside the Syrian sea  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
Let us, like them, without a word  
Rise up and follow thee.

Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of thy peace.

O sabbath rest by Galilee!  
O calm of hills above,  
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
The silence of eternity,  
Interpreted by love!

Breathe through the heats of our desire  
Thy coolness and thy balm;  
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,  
O still small voice of calm

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**Message:** Here we are already the last Sunday in January, and the nights are drawing out. Many people find January the most depressing month, with dark nights, cold grey weather, post-Christmas festivities let-down, financial strain after the excesses of commercial Christmas, and broken new year resolutions. In fact last Monday, the third Monday in January is described in some circles as "blue Monday", when low mood is apparently at its lowest.

Is this how we feel as Christians, after the celebration of the "real meaning of Christmas"?

The Old Testament reading from Isaiah, which is again referred to in our gospel reading speaks of how the people have been brought out from darkness into the light. In the times of Isaiah, he reminded the people that they had been brought out of darkness, they had defeated the enemies. His words also prophesied of one coming who would again bring the people out of darkness into light, words that are used during Advent to remind us of the One, Jesus, who came, and who will come again.

Jesus came as the light of the world, to bring us all out of the darkness into the light. We've had the Christmas celebrations. The birth of Jesus brings us out from the darkness of this world into the light, so how do we respond?

Jesus himself had been in a dark place.

After the affirmation at his baptism, as God's Son, the one whom He loves, Jesus goes into the desert. He is tempted by Satan, and after 40 days would have undoubtedly been very hungry and thirsty. And then, to add to his own personal gloom, he learns that his cousin, the one who baptised him, has been put in prison.

This was certainly a dark day.

What would this have meant to Jesus? Was it yet another taunt from Satan, casting doubts on Jesus' ministry, knocking his confidence? However Jesus saw this as an opportunity, or as a challenge to start his ministry in earnest.

He goes to the place he believes his ministry will best flourish. He leaves the small town of Nazareth, where he has lived for the last 30 years as the local carpenter, and moves to the larger border town of Capernaum. This town had a strategic position with fertile grounds for mission, and the potential for reaching a much wider audience.

He started preaching a message of repentance. His cousin, now languishing in prison, had preached on repentance, but this message was much more than simply turning from sin.

The Jews had longed for the Messiah to come and overthrow the Roman occupiers. They wanted a military solution, and they saw their Messiah as the man to lead such a revolution.

Jesus' message of repentance calls for the turning away of self-centeredness and control, from fighting darkness with darkness, and turning towards the light of love for God and for our neighbour.

Jesus knew that his time on earth was finite. The first thing he did as he started his ministry was to gather a group of men together who would be loyal followers, capable of spreading the good news of the gospel even further once his time on earth was over. Yet he didn't choose knowledgeable academics, or great orators. He went down to the lakeside and moved amongst the fishermen, calling them to leave their nets and follow him.

Each of the men Jesus called made the same response. They put down their nets, their livelihoods, their homes and stepped completely outside their comfort zone and put their trust in this preacher.

So how does this apply to us?

**1.** Both our readings refer to moving from darkness to light. We may find ourselves in a dark place. Perhaps January is a depressing month for you.

We have celebrated Jesus' birth. As any new parent will tell you, it is a tough time, but the rewards of seeing your child develop and grow, far outweigh the difficulties.

If you are going through dark times, you can know that Jesus may not be able to remove your troubles, but he is there with you and there is always light after dark. There is always spring and summer after the dark days of winter.

**2.** Jesus himself had dark times. He spent 40 days in the desert, hungry and thirsty. He learnt about the imprisonment of his cousin, yet this did not dishearten him. In fact, it spurred him into action.

We may face challenges in our personal lives and our spiritual lives. We can see them as challenges or opportunities. Remember God never gives us burdens that are too heavy to bear. Sometimes those dark times help us to understand what it is that God is calling us to do.

**3.** Jesus did not stay in his hometown of Nazareth. Indeed, once he had left, he would never return. He chose instead to move to a place that where his message would reach a more receptive audience, where his ministry had chance to grow and where there were opportunities for evangelism beyond a confined locality.

Where are your mission fields? Do we prefer to stay within our own comfort zone, or are we prepared to move outward. Who could you give the message of good news to today?

**4.** Jesus' first mission was to fishermen. He recognised where people were and what language they understood. Jesus formed community with these men

When we move out in our localities, who are the people we meet? What words do we use to make the gospel of good news relevant to them? We do not have to do this alone, we are called to be in community, and of course we have Jesus guiding us along the way.

So in the gloom of January let us move into the light of new life brought through knowing Jesus. Let us respond to his call with eagerness and enthusiasm, trusting him as those fishermen did.

**Prayer:** God of light, keep us faithful as bearers of your light. Help us to keep our focus on you and not to be overwhelmed with the challenges ahead. Help us to move outward beyond our comfort zone. Help us, like the fishermen, to leave behind the familiar and safe, and move into your light with freedom and joy. Amen

**Hymn: STF 660 Called to Christ...**

**Watch on YouTube :** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5f1ON6umzcc>

Called by Christ to be disciples  
every day in every place,  
we are not to hide as hermits  
but to spread the way of grace;  
citizens of heaven's kingdom,  
though this world is where we live,  
as we serve a faithful Master,  
faithful service may we give.

Richly varied are our pathways,  
many callings we pursue:  
may we use our gifts and talents  
always, Lord, to honour you;  
so in government or commerce,  
college, hospice, farm or home,  
whether volunteers or earning,  
may we see your kingdom come.

Hard decisions may confront us,  
urging us to compromise;  
still obedience is our watchword—  
make us strong and make us wise!  
Secular is turned to sacred,  
made a precious offering,  
as our daily lives are fashioned  
in submission to our King

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**Prayers of Intercession:** We pray that the light of God will shine in the dark corners of the Church, and set us free from Prejudice, small-mindedness, complacency and hypocrisy; that as members of the Body of Christ we can move freely through the power of God wherever we are called to go, available and active in God's service.

We pray that our world may be lit by this light in the darkness to bring freedom and hope to so many people desperate and fearful. We pray especially for the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, in the Middle East and in Iran. Bring recognition and respect to people of all faiths and of none, bring peace and reconciliation, tolerance and compassion to your world.

We pray that in our own homes and neighbourhoods the light of godly loving may soften harsh edges, encourage mutual caring, and heal dysfunctional or damaging relationships.

We pray that all those whose lives are fettered by the past, by rejection, guilt, pain or anxiety, may be set free and encouraged and enabled to live to the full.

Thank you, Father for your transforming love. Lord God of power, set us free to live. Merciful Father, accept these prayers in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

**Hymn: MP71 / SoF 738 Go Forth ..**

**Watch on YouTube :** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkDD4GiqUEM>

Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!  
God's saving news to all the nations take;  
proclaim Christ Jesus, saviour, Lord, and king,  
that all the world his worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;  
he will in grace respond to all who call:  
how shall they call if they have never heard  
the gracious invitation of his word?

Go forth and tell where still the darkness lies;  
in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:  
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,

a love like yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:  
share God's good gifts-let no one be denied;  
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,  
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.]

Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!  
go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;  
go till all nations his great name adore  
and serve him, Lord and king for evermore

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**Blessing:** May the Lord inspire us and fill our lives with brightness and truth. May he strengthen us in mind and body, and may his blessing be with each one of us now and always. Amen