

25 January 2026 Epiphany 3

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F S HS

Jesus, Light of the World

Genesis 1 & 2; Isaiah 9:2; Psalm 27

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. Isaiah 9: 2

The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1, 4-9

We are into the third week of Epiphany – meaning ‘manifestation’, or revelation of a sacred secret. Today we focus on the idea of Jesus as ‘Light of the world’. It’s not a new concept and the notions of light and darkness and the battle between evil and goodness are recognized in every major religion including ours.

One of my personal goals for the next three years is to stay physically fit.

You know the saying, “you don’t stop living because you’re getting older. You get older because you’ve stopped living!”

Even though I walk for exercise almost every day, lately, I’ve taken to walking up our local maunga - Te Mata Peak - more regularly. It makes me work harder and I love the marvellous views from the top - especially at dawn.

It was very sad to read of what happened at Mt Maunganui this week. I was praying a silent prayer as I walked up Te Mata Peak on the morning after the disaster. How could that happen in such a beautiful place?

On some mornings when I climb Te Mata, there are one or two other insomniacs up on the mountain at that time. Walkers, bikers and the District Council woman who empties the rubbish bins every day.

There is a moment just before dawn in Hawke’s Bay when the world seems to hold its breath. The hills are still dark, the birds haven’t yet begun their chorus, and the first thin line of light begins to push against the horizon. It is gentle, but it is unstoppable. It does not ask permission. It simply arrives — and everything begins to change.

It reminds me of several passages of the scriptures including the Genesis Stories, today’s reading from Isaiah 9 and the verse from Psalm 27 which I quoted as my texts today.

The verse from Isaiah 9: “The people who walked in darkness, have seen a great light.”

Certainly, true of the walk up Te Mata before dawn. You are walking in darkness until the sun begins to rise.

When Jesus says, “*I am the light of the world,*” he is naming that kind of moment. Not a decorative glow, not just a lovely picture-perfect sunrise, but the arrival of a new reality.

Light that reveals. Light that awakens. Light that creates. Light that guides.

From the very first page of Scripture, light is God’s first gift to creation. “*Let there be light.*” Before there is land or sky or life, there is light that illuminates, like the unveiling of a world that had been hidden in darkness.

In the well-loved Prologue of John’s Gospel, John hears that echo of the primal light and dares to say: the same Word that called light into being now stands among us in human flesh. Jesus is not simply a bearer of light; he is the source of that Light. The radiance of God made visible.

And what does Christ’s light do?

It reveals truth — not to shame us, but to heal us. In the presence of Christ, we see God clearly, but we also see ourselves clearly. Our fears, our wounds, our longings, our shadows. Yet Christ’s light is never harsh or judgemental. It is the light of dawn, not the interrogation lamp. It exposes in order to restore. It uncovers in order to renew.

This is why people in the Gospels were drawn to Jesus even when they didn’t fully understand him. His light was not a threat; it was a promise. A promise that the night and the darkness, will not have the final word.

Christ’s light is not only revelation — revealing God to us, it is also a source of guidance. Think of the pillar of fire in the wilderness, leading Israel through the long nights of uncertainty.

John wants us to hear that story again. Jesus is the One who goes ahead of us when the path is unclear. Jesus is the One who stands with us when the night feels long. Jesus is the One who refuses to abandon us even when we cannot see the way forward.

His light does not remove the wilderness, but it transforms how we see the wilderness and the way we walk through it. We know that we are not alone.

Like the psalmist we can say, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strong hold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?”

Sometimes, the meaning of ‘seeing the light’ can be more mundane, as simple as seeing the truth, or clearing up a misunderstanding.

I had an incident this week where I misheard a good friend. What I thought he said, bothered me enough to make me confront him about what he had said.

As it turns out, he was only joking and I had not heard the first part of what he said. When he explained the full story it all made sense. Light replacing darkness.

I still have my friend, and he still has my friendship. Light (for me) came in the form of ‘knowledge’ – ‘knowledge of the whole truth’.

There was regret all round. Regret that I had not heard the first part of what he said and regret on his part that he hadn’t explained himself well. Thankful for the Light.

How many times do we judge people or situations without knowing the full story?
How many times are we misunderstood because people don’t know the full story about us?

After Jesus’ declaration in John that he is the Light of the world, the gospel takes an astonishing twist.

Jesus turns to his disciples – to us – and says, “You are the light of the world!”

Not because we generate light on our own, but because we are meant to reflect his radiance. Like the moon reflecting the sun, our calling is to shine with a kind of borrowed glory. To illuminate injustice. To reveal hope. To bear witness to a God who has not given up on the world.

In a universe where light travels for millions of years, even after the star that produced it has died, the metaphor becomes even more profound. The light of Christ continues to reach places where he is not yet recognised. His resurrection radiance outlives death. His glory expands outward, touching lives across time and space — including ours, here, now two thousand years after his ascension.

So, when we proclaim Jesus as the Light of the World, we are proclaiming a cosmic truth and a deeply personal one. A truth that stretches from the first dawn of creation to the quiet dawns over Te Mata Peak. A truth that reaches into every shadowed corner of our lives and every darkened place in our world.

The night is real. But it is not permanent. The darkness is deep. But it is not triumphant. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

We symbolize this truth each Sunday by our Lighting the Christ Candle – knowing that the Light of Christ can never be overcome by the darkness.

PRAYER

God of grace,
you have spoken to us through your Word
and shown us the light of Christ.
Strengthen us to walk in his way,
to live as people of unity and hope,
and to bear witness to your love in the world.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**