

John 1:1-14 Light in the darkness

We are now almost at the end of 2022, and I wonder what your lasting impression of it is?

Because I remember a lot of people thinking that 2022 was going to be a much better year than 2021. But then again, people thought that 2021 was going to be better than 2020.

The biggest news of 2022 is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We are even feeling the effects of that economically here in Australia, with inflation and interest rate rises. Floods in the eastern part of Australia have been catastrophic, multiple times over. And of course, Covid hasn't go away.

These – it seems - are dark times.

We can look at recent events and get the feeling that things have never been so bad before... but then things have been bad before. Things have looked without hope before. Go back to the events of September 2001, or the cold war, the Second World War, the Great Depression, the First World War and on it goes. Each generation has been confronted by horrors, often several times over.

And while some things do change over time, some diseases controlled or even eradicated, wars won or lost, borders resolved, peace made... some things haven't changed. Differences aren't always resolved, time has not healed all wounds, some rage, some simmer, some flare up from time to time.

And at a personal level, as we get older, there's more to worry about, more people to miss. We, so often in our own lives, are in dark places.

But the message of Christmas is hope for people who are in dark places. We heard the prophecy of Isaiah, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2a)

Sometimes it's easy to see the light, and sometimes it's hard. It may be a greater leap to the light for people in those darkest of places, but the wonderful thing about the light that Christ brings is that the darkness has not overcome it.

If God seems far away, too far for you to reach; don't despair - you don't have to try and find your way to God, because God reached out to you: in that first Christmas, God reached out to us. To us all.

Jesus says later in John's gospel that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, so that whomsoever believes in him shall not die, but have eternal life.

John's gospel refers to Jesus as the source of life, and tells us that his life brought light to people... The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness not overcome it...

Wherever you might be this Christmas, whether you are overjoyed by the festive season, or saddened by the memories of Christmas' past, worrying about this Christmas, or despairing for the future, the light of Christ shines for you.

At Christmas we remember the birth of Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem, and we see nativity scenes showing the holy family, the shepherds and the wise men bathing in the glow of heavenly light... though the reality of a baby born in a stable in first century Judea might not have been quite so idyllic. And of course, things soon darkened for Jesus: Herod set out to kill him and the family fled to Egypt. And when Jesus returned and began his ministry, he was rejected by his own people. And we know from the Easter story, that Jesus was conspired against, betrayed, rejected, denied, humiliated, beaten and crucified. Jesus has been to the dark places.

But the darkness couldn't overcome him. And he rose again.

The light of Jesus still shines for us in the dark places of our lives. We only have to turn to him in response.

In Jesus, the word became flesh, and shone a light into a dark world. A light that shines for each one of us. At Christmas, and always.

Amen.