

*“The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.”* Isaiah 9:2

Can you remember a time when you were searching for something in the darkness? Maybe you were playing Ghost in the Graveyard outside, or trying to make your way to the bathroom in the middle of the night. It’s a bizarre experience to need to rely so much more on senses other than our sight – listening for footsteps, our fingertips sliding across walls and doorframes. It’s disorienting. Our depth perception is off. The darkness can feel intrusive, like it’s pressing in on you.

In many parts of the Old Testament, like here in Isaiah, we read about “people walking in the darkness.” This terminology referred to people who weren’t worshipping or following Yahweh. They were looking to other things to guide them, lead them, and give them hope and purpose in their lives. They looked to other gods to provide the things they needed, and they looked to the power of surrounding nations to help them fight off their enemies.

In America today, we’re encouraged to look to ourselves to decide our futures, to determine our identities, and to persevere through hard seasons of exams, difficult family dynamics, break-ups, and college applications. We’re told “You can do it!” “You’ve got it within you!” “You get to decide!” We’re told that freedom means total independence, and that making ourselves the kings of our lives is what’s best for us. We’re told to create our own hope and our own light.

Well, I’m not sure how that’s working out for you, but it sure hasn’t worked well for me. I find that my world gets darker and darker the more I try to manage my own future and muster up my own hope. Anxiety rises and the more I try to untangle it, myself, the bigger the knot grows. I need rescue from the outside. I need a greater King to break in and bring order and peace and light to this intrusive darkness.

Thanks be to God in Jesus Christ, this is what the Biblical story is: It is the story of rescue by a good King who breaks into unmanageable, impossible places and brings light. Hope. He brings Himself. John 1 describes the person of King Jesus, God with skin on, coming into the world *as light*; and Revelation 22:5 says that in eternity, God Himself will *be the light* by which we see everything else. Christmas day is our big day to remember this incarnational *breaking in* to our world. It changed everything.

At Christmas, while we wait for Christ’s return, God invites us to bring everything we’re waiting for to Him – places where we long for healing, we long for change, we long for peace, and we long for connection. To me, these places of longing and waiting can be like walking through a dark tunnel; but with the eyes of grace, I can see that the Light of Life has been with me in the darkness all along. He has already broken through. Instead of looking to ourselves for the light this Christmas, may we bring these places of waiting, of darkness, of loneliness, to King Jesus. May we let them draw us to the Light of the World, who is intimately familiar with these experiences, and who gives us the hope that *we will* see ultimate healing and fulfillment one day, when we are face to face with Him.

Until then, just take a look around you. Jesus Christ delights in making beauty through darkness. As you drive through neighborhoods decorated for the season this year, I pray that the bright, festive pops of color that adorn houses and trees would draw your heart back to Him. I pray that you’d notice the way these Christmas lights break through the darkness of night and bring loveliness to the silhouettes around them. They illuminate reality, and they invite wonder and joy, just as the Lord does for us through his incarnation on Christmas morning.

Questions for Further Reflection:

- 1) When is a time you can remember light flooding into a dark place, and what was it like?
- 2) What is appealing about being our own kings?
- 3) What are some of the difficulties of being our own kings?
- 4) What is a place in your life that you long to see Jesus shine light into?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, would you make us more and more a people who walk in the light of Yahweh, and who trust You as the eyes of our hearts struggle to adjust to Reality with You as King. Give us Your hope and peace, we pray, and please break into the dark, seemingly impossible places in our lives. Amen.