

A Small Light!

A Christmas Reflection on Light and Darkness

Reflections Reflections 3 December 2023

John 1:10

John 3:19

Matthew 2:2

A small light lit up the grounds of our church building in Noida yesterday evening. The light that was lit inside the church moved out, beautifully and in unison, to the outside, in the hope that it would light the paths of passers-by, and perhaps of our neighbours too. When I heard the pastor announce the programme, I thought of the many patients in the hospital on the other side of the church, many of whom must be critically, or even terminally, ill. If only they could see the light, and recognise it, I wondered.

The ninth reading of Scripture, during the Nine Lessons and Carols service, was appropriately taken from the Gospel according to John. John had no doubt that the spiritual darkness of this world cannot compete with the light that Jesus brought into it. In the same breath, John lamented: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10, KJV).

If I may shift for a moment to some scientific data published by NASA: it is said that roughly sixty-eight per cent of the universe is made up of dark energy, and twenty-seven per cent of dark matter, meaning that some ninety-five per cent of the universe is given over to total darkness. That fact ought to make us all the more thankful to God for creating the sun that gives light to the earth, and the moon that reflects that light. Ungrateful as we are, we fail to recognise that God, in His template for creation, mercifully illuminated only five per cent of His creation; and when He saw that the physical lighting was not enough, He came in the person of Jesus Christ to bring the divine light into the spiritually decaying lives of His people.

It is a matter of irony that the earth and the sky, in the very region where He once set His feet, are now lit up by devastating fires and by rockets bringing death. Nor is it only there; everywhere in the world, including in our own country, people seem to love the dark rather than the light. Are you reading me?

Light has the power both to attract and to repel. That attraction is seen in the Nativity narratives. The Magi from the east travelled to Jerusalem, drawn and led by the light of a unique star, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2, KJV). Light does not permit neutrality in people. Let us sit at His feet, then, and learn from

Jesus, as He spoke to Nicodemus: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19, KJV). Jesus is the light of the world, and in the end, He will not leave us unchanged.

We are now in the month of December, and Christmas fast approaches. We fall into a festive mood, eating, drinking, and making merry, as people did on the night in Bethlehem when the Word became flesh. Did Joseph and Mary lose anything as they held the Light of the World in their trembling hands? And what of those who remained oblivious to the entry of God into their neighbourhood: strife, war, death, and misery? Are they paying the price for their neglect of that needy couple, a neglect compounded by the putting to death of the very Child they refused to accept? I wonder.

Let those who refuse to see the light beware.