

*May the words of my lips and the thoughts and meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen*

Our gospel reading tonight contains these words **I am the light of the world**. This week we have been reminded just how dark our world can be and while we reflect on what has happened and pray for all those whose loved ones were killed or injured and ask God to strengthen the medical, police and security personnel involved; as Christians we can also take comfort in the fact that our God sent his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ to bring light to into this dark world as well as to provide the promise of eternal life to all those who believe in him. Jesus offers everyone who believes the opportunity to live a life transformed.

For many of us we will have experienced events in our lives which have changed them forever, it could be meeting the love of your life (who you have hopefully married, having children, or meeting Jesus and following him, and these are just three positive examples.

The blind man in our gospel reading tonight had just such an encounter. He was blind and therefore he had to rely on the kindness and generosity of others to simply survive, and this he did by begging, there was no alternative. His begging needed to provide not only for him, but also for his family, his parents would have been relying on him, and any siblings he may have had to look after them as they grew older, they were also reliant on the Jewish culture of looking after the poor in society.

When Jesus saw the blind man, he wanted to transform the blind man's life while also using it as a teaching point. The teaching point is about the grace of God to transform our lives through our relationship with his son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.

While we and our loved ones may not be physically blind, there are other forms of blindness, which we can suffer from, it may be blindness to character traits which others can see in us but we can not, or even traits which God alone sees, it could be blindness to our spiritual side, blindness to God. John Newton, who wrote our last hymn (Amazing Grace) knew this well. Jesus says he is the light of the world, but in order to see the light, we need to open our eyes.

Once we have seen the light that Jesus offers, we need to firstly come closer to it, to find out more, and then to fully enter into the light of Jesus and as we do, God gives us the opportunity, through His grace to have our lives transformed by coming into a relationship with him through His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and it is through that relationship, as we continue to develop and grow, as we become more like Jesus and

our lives continue to be transformed, which is a life-long process, we eventually receive eternal life.

Are we and our loved ones blind to living the life God intended us to live? Jesus wants everyone to see His light and all that he offers and wants people to be drawn to that light, and not just drawn to it, but to enter into the light. When we enter into the light of Jesus we also enter into a relationship with him, and it is by having a relationship with God and his son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, our lives also become transformed. God wants us, through His grace to lead lives transformed so that we can grow close to him, to enter into a long lasting relationship with Him and ultimately enter into eternal life through salvation by believing in Jesus. All of this is only possible if we allow God to transform our lives.

It is through God's grace, that our lives are transformed by God and our relationship with him needs to develop and grow just like human relationships. As our relationship deepens through worship, prayer and bible study and our lives also come to reflect Jesus as we become more like him as we constantly try to apply his teaching to every area of our lives, and as a result our lives become more transformed, it may not be a sudden experience, but happen gradually over several years.

If we have experienced the transforming power of Jesus in our lives, then would we also want our families and friends, those we love and care about to experience the same transforming power? To have their eyes opened to see God and enter into a relationship with Jesus? Encouraging other people to come to know and love Jesus is part of the mission which Jesus gave us, along with every Christian, when we are told to go and make disciples of all nations, and for the majority of us, we don't get the opportunity or have the chance to tell complete strangers about Jesus, to nurture them and follow up and see them come to faith, however we do have this opportunity with our families and friends.

While it can be a challenge to discuss the transforming power of God in our lives with those who we are close to and it is easy to think that there is time left to have these discussions, the events of this week have reminded us just how precious life is.

The first step to take to telling our loved ones about Jesus is easy and that is to pray. Pray for their hearts to be opened, to receive the message, pray for ourselves to make the most of the opportunities which God gives us to bring up just how we love being in God's light, why they should also come to his light and enter into a deep and loving relationship with Him.

26<sup>th</sup> March 2017 – Sunday after terrorist attack in Westminster - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent - Evensong  
John 9;

Psalm 23

1 Samuel 16:1-13

The Man Born Blind

The second step is harder, and that is to keep on praying, even when it appears that hearts are not being opened and that we don't seem to have any opportunities to talk to them about the Jesus.

In a few weeks' time, between Ascension and Pentecost there is a global prayer initiative, which we are taking part in, called "Thy Kingdom Come" where we are all encouraged to pray and especially to pray for those who we know and love who have not yet had their lives transformed by Jesus. They may be people who have seen the light of Jesus but have not been drawn in or it may be people who have not yet even seen the light of Jesus. As we approach this time, will you join in, will you pray for people who you know who are not in a relationship with Jesus? Who will you pray for?