

March 2025: Darkness

I am one of those people who really appreciate the mornings and evenings gradually getting lighter at this time of year. Before Christmas I regularly find myself counting the weeks, and then the days, until we are past the shortest day. And as we move towards Spring, I find myself saying to myself, 'Soon it will be light at

Yet, unless I am driving, I actually rather enjoy the dark. At one of the places we used to live, a deeply treasured activity was to walk our dog to the next village, and then turn off my headtorch and walk the mile or so back home along the river bank in the dark, with just enough starlight to make the slightly lighter path show up, so that I didn't fall in the river! And most of my favourite places are places far from artificial lights; places where the nights are dark enough to really see the stars; places where I can gaze upwards for ages, with more and more stars becoming visible as my eyes adjust, places where the Milky Way really shows up as a broad, lighter stripe across the night sky.

When the biblical writers searched for ways to describe the indescribable, when they tried to find ways to say what God is like, what Jesus is like, one of the images they chose was light. St John, for example, wrote: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all' [1 John 1: 5]. That imagery of light being associated with goodness and hope, and darkness being associated with badness or difficulty has become rooted in Christian culture and tradition.

Fortunately there are also many places in the Bible that remind us that the common biblical imagery of light and darkness is just that; just imagery. And imagery is good when it works for us, good when it helps us understand more about God, but best ignored if we don't find it helpful. I can imagine the writer of Psalm 139, for example, sitting in the quietness of night time, gazing at the myriad of stars, reflecting on the God who created all, and writing, 'Even darkness is no darkness with you; darkness and light to you are both alike.' [Psalm 139: 12] The psalmist understood that we can seek and know God's presence in the stillness of night, just as readily as in the brightness of day. Indeed, the gospels tell us of many occasions when Jesus went out to meet with God in prayer during the night.

So my prayer for us all is that as the seasons turn, as the nights grow shorter, but also warmer, we find moments to wait for God in the dark stillness and beauty of the night.

Yours in Christ,
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