

In the beginning was the Word...

An Advent & Christmas Course from the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney



Light

Monday 25th December 2023 – Christmas Day



Photo by Bishop Dorsey

“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 1:5

The coastline here could be any of a thousand places, but it is Aberdeen. It could be a picture of a sunrise, or a sunset. I cannot tell if the light is growing and will soon dispel the darkness, or the darkness is growing and will soon cover the light.

The great poet and Anglican priest John Donne, reflecting on a grave illness of his own, asserted that, for a Christian, the difference between sunrise and sunset matters little. He whimsically saw himself as “a flat map” and his physicians gathered around his bed poking and prodding him as though they were “cosmographers.” The doctors were coming to a grim diagnosis, that he would soon pass through the straits of death. And Donne’s response?

*I joy, that in these straits, I see my West.
For, though their currents yield return to none,
What shall my West hurt me? As West and East
In all flat maps (and I am one) are one,
So Death doth touch the Resurrection.*

Only three days beyond the winter solstice, with a good deal of winter to go, we may be sick of the dark. Perhaps we are also sick of the dark within our own souls—our fears, our wounds, our persistent sins. John Donne and John the Evangelist would agree that the miraculous secret of the Incarnation is this: if you wish to find the Light of Christ, look more deeply into the darkness. He is there, steadily shining in the depths of the very things you are afraid of, covering all with the brilliance of His Grace. Here is a prayer for Christmas night:

*O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the everliving Father in Heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed:
Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
We sing Thy praises O God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Thou art worthy at all times
to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of Life,
and to be glorified before all worlds. Amen.*

The word for each day (3-25 December is taken from Advent Word 2023 #adventword).

...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.