

I am the light of the world

TITLE

As you will know, at the end of last month we visited our flat in Spain for the first time in 2 years. We were fortunate that during our time there, Advent started. Spanish cities are famed for their Christmas lights including Fuengirola which has a fine set of lights

FUENGIROLA LIGHTS

Even the main roads into town were lit up with corridors of lights. CORRIDOR X2 Malaga, Spain's third largest city is famed for its Christmas lights and they didn't disappoint this year.

STILL OF CALLE LARIOS

This is the Calle Larios and it looked just like a huge cathedral nave. As we stood there admiring this scene, suddenly they burst into life and out came my phone!

CALLE LARIOS LIGHTS VIDEO

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Why do we put up lights at Christmas? Amongst other things, we do it to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. One of the refreshing things about going to Spain at Christmas, is virtually no Christmas decorations are of Father Christmas although cultural pollution from America and northern Europe means that there is an increasing tendency for fake snow and reindeer, FAKE SNOW but it was 15 days before we stumbled across a Santa's grotto and that was in a place where foreign visitors and residents hung out.

MANGER SCENE

Otherwise the theme of lights was biblical – after all Christmas is about Jesus. Why? Here are a few words spoken by Jesus in John 8:

READING

John 8: 12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

13 The Pharisees challenged him, 'Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.'

14 Jesus answered, 'Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.'

15 You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. 16 But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. 17 In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. 18 I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.'

19 Then they asked him, 'Where is your father?'

'You do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied. 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also.' 20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

DECORATION

It was the convention that Rabbis spoke only of God. They taught of Him, they encouraged Jews only to worship Him, they were taught to obey Him, they were encouraged to follow Him alone. Yet the message of Jesus was only about Himself – follow me. The Jewish leaders questioned Him, criticising Him for doing that. Yet in this passage as in others in John's Gospel, Jesus was saying "follow me" and the implication was clear – because He was making God His father and within a couple of days He said VERSE "I and my Father are One" John 10:30.

At Christmas time we don't just remember the birth of some child, but we recognise the entry into this world of God as a human being: Jesus. Why did He come? One answer He gave is in the first verse we read:

VERSE

John 8: 12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

The end of December is the darkest time of the year in the northern hemisphere, but Jesus' coming as the light wasn't to brighten up dark days! His purpose was to address the darkness in this world: the darkness of war, the darkness of disease, the darkness of hate, the darkness of selfishness, the darkness of injustice, the darkness of crime, the darkness of violence, the darkness of drug misuse, the darkness of poverty, the darkness of famine, the darkness of want, the darkness of loneliness, the darkness of abandonment, the darkness of ill-health, the darkness of corruption, the darkness of broken relationships - I'm sure that if I was to give you a few moments to think, you could all think of good examples, personal examples even, of all this. Darkness. The darkness of human sin, the darkness of abandoning God, of rebellion against Him, the darkness of choosing not to follow Him; of saying "there is no God." Even in this past two years we have experienced first hand the fear and the hopelessness that comes when we contemplate life when there seems nothing positive ahead.

TITLE

Yet Jesus calls out 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' These words ring out over the millennia and Christmas lights testify, if only we will take notice, of the light He can bring into the darkness of our society, but more importantly, into the darkness that is in our lives. The baby of Bethlehem, became the Christ of the cross. In His death on the cross He died so that human sin can be dealt with. He came to bring light into the darkness into our lives. Hope for now and hope for the future.

Is your Christmas dark this year? If you have never trusted Jesus, maybe you've never thought He is real or relevant, then tonight He shines into your darkness and says "follow Me. Don't walk in darkness. Walk in the light of life." Let Him change you. Let Him bring a new perspective on life. Let Him bring hope where it lacks.

Perhaps you've been a Christian a while but the events of the last two year shave weighed heavily on you. You walk in the light, but feel like someone trying to find your way on a very dark night using the light on your phone which has a failing battery! Jesus says to you "I am the light of the world. Follow me. Trust me to bring you light so you won't feel threatened by the darkness, but walk in the light of life afresh – allow His Spirit to fill you anew this Christmas time as we remember again of the hope that the Christ child brought. Let's pray.

Thank you Father for Jesus. Thank you that into the darkness of the world, He has brought us hope; hope for now, hope for the future, hope for eternity. Thank you that you offer each man and woman here this evening the opportunity of walking in the light that Jesus brings. Thank you that receiving and following Jesus is so simple; just inviting Jesus into my life, thanking Him for dying for my sins, asking for Him to bring the light of life and the hope that He brings today. Thank you father that for those of us who know you already that you can dispel the darkness that has got into our lives by what ever means. Father, may Your Holy Spirit fill us afresh with light and hope, that this Christmas may refresh our hope in You.

We ask this in Jesus' name

Amen.

John's Gospel speaks right from the start about the way that the coming Son of God was the light and Delyth is going to read part of John's Gospel now.