

Let's begin with Prayer:

God our Father, hear us as we pray.

Lord, our world has much darkness and there are times when it impacts our lives. Thank you for being near us in this life and for giving us your Son who brings us light, and whose life experience gives you a unique understanding of our struggle.

Be with the needy, Father, and with those who are persecuted for following your Son.

Bless those who struggle with illness, and those who attend to their needs.

May our time of worship be to your glory and to the glory of your Son Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.

HYMN 160 Benjamin Rhodes 1743-1825

1. My heart and voice I raise to spread Messiah's praise,
Messiah's praise let all repeat.
The universal Lord, by whose almighty word,
Creation rose in form complete.
2. A servant's form he wore, and in his body bore
Our dreadful curse on Calvary.
He like a victim stood and poured his sacred blood
To set the guilty captives free.
3. But soon the Victor rose, triumphant o'er his foes
And led the vanquished host in chains
He threw their empire down,
His foes compelled to own o'er all the great Messiah reigns.
4. With mercy's mildest grace he governs all our race
in wisdom, righteousness and love
Who to Messiah fly shall find redemption nigh
And all his great salvation prove.
5. Hail, Saviour, Prince of Peace, Your kingdom shall increase
Til all the world your glory see
And righteousness abound as the great profound,
And fill the earth with purity.

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BIBLE READING:

- Luke 8 vs 26-39

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you

want with me, Jesus Son of the Most High God? I beg you don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot, and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Jesus asked him "What is your name?" "Legion" he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

- Galatians 3 vs 23-29

Before the coming of the faith we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that the faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God, through faith.

For all of you who are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Message: "Out of Darkness

I am going to begin with a little geography. Location: Jesus has crossed the lake to the territory of the Gerasenes. This is the near the modern Golan heights, which until 1973 was a part of the nation of Syria. Bordering the Galilee region of Israel, and about 300 meters higher than it. The western edge overlooked a large slice of northern Israel, A good platform for artillery to fire down upon farms, and villages. Life was hell in those times for anyone living below. Then, during the 1973 Yom Kippur war (6/10/73 - 25/10/73) Israel captured the Golan (or most of it) and has since annexed it, amid some protests. The days of darkness for those living below, are hence, over and Israel has added some 300 Square Kms to its territory, at Syria's expense.

In Jesus' time it was known as the Decapolis, a ten independent (Greek) city region. This is where Jesus travels with his disciples, and where he encounters the man in darkness. As Jesus stepped ashore the man was literally, right there. He was from the town, probably Gadara --naked, and deranged—interesting start to the place? Demonic voices cry out

Out Of Darkness

“What do you want with me, Jesus Son of the most High God ? I beg you don’t torture me.” Apparently Jesus had ordered the spirits to leave the man who had been chained up and isolated due to seizures caused by the spirits in him--- even to living in a cemetery.

The spirits answer to the name legion (a military term meaning 3-6 thousand soldiers).

So, many spirits were possessing the man. These evil beings recognise Jesus (a target for them, Zech 13:7), and his authority, begging him to leave them be. The nearby herd of pigs gives Jesus an opportunity to send the spirits into them (also quite convenient as the pigs are unclean to Jews, and therefore have little value to them). The demons beg Jesus spare them from the abyss (damnation Rev 9:1, and 20:1—3) but their fate is sealed. To heal (bring him out of darkness) this poor tortured man, the demons exit into the pigs, who rush down the slope into the lake and drown. The (gentile) pig herders run in fear to nearby Gadara, (possibly modern day Umm Qais) bringing others out to see what has happened. The former demoniac whom they all feared, is there sitting calm and dressed at Jesus feet. Incredibly, they are **afraid!**

The outcome—those tending the pigs (Gentiles from the nearby Greek city of Gadara) are amazed at what has happened, and run off to report it all to the town. Curious at the report of a healing, people gather to see for themselves. Could it be that they will no longer have to be afraid to venture outside the town? They arrive to find the man sitting calmly at Jesus feet—AT PEACE, fully clothed (righteousness) and calm in the spirit of grace. Then the world’s response to this miracle is FEAR.

Not the man healed though! He wants more, begging to follow Jesus. Jesus, however, has more pressing work for him to do, to SPREAD THE WORD- so begins the earliest of ministry into the gentile world.

Many Christians live in fear of a dark, unbelieving world, where Jesus is often rejected. It seems this is usually within the prosperous west, where we live in peace and comfort. The “Barnabas world” (**Barnabas** aid), on the other hand seems more faithful amidst great adversity and struggle (my personal favourite is an eight year old brick kiln worker named Jennifer in Pakistan).

Paul’s letter to the Galatian Church addresses the escape from the bondage of the law (guardian) which has been found through faith in Jesus. “You are all one in Jesus Christ” writes Paul to the Gentile members of the Galatian church. They have the comfort of knowing that in Christ they too are included just the same as their Jewish friends. ALL ONE IN CHRIST, having the light that comes with that.

How goes it in our world? Do we live in the light of Jesus our LORD (John 8:12)? Are there times when we wonder if our faith can survive the apathy, abuse, and aggression of the world? Recently I read in a Baptist paper, the following:

A recent report issued by McCrindle (A RESOURCE/ SOCIAL/ RESEARCH GROUP)

- The percentage of Australians attending Church at least monthly has steadily risen from 15% in 2011 to 21% in 2021
- The % of Australians who are warm towards Christianity has risen from 58% in 2011 to 65% this year

Out Of Darkness

- No less than 784,000 who ticked 'no' to religion in the 2016 census went on to tick 'Christian' in the 2021 census. NOW that's worth thinking on!!

Smaller congregations at times find it hard to be optimistic about the faith -- I understand that, coming from a small battling Methodist church in Port Adelaide, and experiencing some today, when we are privileged to share with them (invitations welcome!).

In conclusion McCrindle notes that across the 2010's it was older Australians driving the growth in Christianity. Other studies now show a surge in this decade toward younger people.

What an encouraging turning of the tide! Out of darkness!! Let there be light.

God Bless

SONG: "King of Kings" Brooke Ligertwood

1. In the darkness we were waiting, without hope, without light,
Til from Heaven You came running
There was mercy In your eyes, to fulfill the law and prophets,
To a virgin came the word, From a throne of endless glory,
To a cradle in the dirt

*Praise the Father, praise the Son, praise the Spirit three in one,
God of Glory, Majesty, praise forever to the King of Kings.*
2. To reveal the kingdom coming and to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation You did not despise the cross
For even in your suffering You saw to the other side
Knowing that this was our salvation. Jesus for our sake you died.
3. And the morning that You rose all of Heaven held its breath
Til that stone was moved for good, for the lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs and the angels stood in awe
For all the souls of all who'd come to the Father are restored.

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PRAYER :

Lord God, Father, Creator, and provider, se with us as we struggle and join us in our worship. Grant us strength and peace as we find ways to bring the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus to prominence, and as the ONLY way to Life in its fullness.

Bless us now as we go on in this life. In Jesus name we pray Amen

*This service was prepared by Grant Jewell for HopeNet SA
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