

A vision of hope

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

Everywhere we look in the world today we seem to see and hear about evidences of bad news: strife, inequity, crime, poverty, racism, deception, discrimination, oppression, anger, hate, alienation, depression, famine, climate change, disease and death. The list goes on and on. Many thoughtful and caring people are striving earnestly in various ways to solve these and other problems like them. Certainly there are bright rays of encouragement and hope in the midst of it all, but darkness seems to be closing in. Various theories have been put forward about the underlying dynamics of the critical problems we're facing. Is there one unifying theme behind them all that can help us work toward solving them together?

During this season we remember a man named Jesus who was born of loving but poor parents into a society dominated by a partially enlightened but oppressive and colonialist government that discriminated against people like him. He was raised in a small town where everyone knew that he had been conceived before his parents were married. After honorably completing an education common to children in his community he joined his father's carpentry business and remained unmarried well into adulthood.

By the time he had turned 30 people were beginning to wonder what was to become of this dedicated man when, apparently under the influence of his cousin John, his life went through a dramatic transformation. After submitting to John's baptism he changed from a quiet hometown man into an impassioned itinerant preacher who brought a message of good news to a darkened world of God's merciful love, rule, and reign. He proclaimed forgiveness of sin, hope for the future, peace to the troubled, freedom and justice to the captives, wisdom to the searching, and hearing and sight to the deaf and blind. His message was and remains as simple now as it was when He walked this earth:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. Give all your troubles to me and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and everything you need will be added to you. Then arise and shine when your light comes and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you.

The critical fact we can proclaim is that the Savior of the world - God with us - has been born bringing wonderful news of hope, love, peace, and wisdom to all who have ears to hear and hearts to receive. And, having carried this message in word and deed, He laid His life down for us and rose from the dead to confirm His Word.

Rejoice with us!

O Father, may your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!

Scripture references: Ephesians 5:14, John 14:6, 1 Peter 5:7, Matthew 6:33, Isaiah 60:1-2, Matthew 5:10