

**St Davids and Michaels Sunday  
26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany**

**Isaiah 9 v 1-4  
I Cor 1 v 10-18  
Matt 4 v 12-23**

**In the name of the Father, Son  
and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**‘The People living in darkness  
have seen a great light. On  
those living in the land of the  
shadow of death - a light has  
dawned’.**

**Darkness and Light - well  
known pictures of our life of**

**faith. But what does it mean to  
Walk in the Light of Christ - can  
the Darkness be completely  
eliminated.**

**Let’s start with the Light of  
Dawn -**

**A metaphor perhaps for the  
beginning of the Faith journey.**

**A few years ago now - as part  
of a late mid-life crisis /  
opportunity Helen and I  
shipped our Landrover to Cape  
Town, kitted it out with a roof  
top tent and all things  
necessary for an adventure,  
and made our way - slowly -up  
to Malawi - a country we know**

**well and to which we were returning to volunteer in what we called our Senior Gap Year. What I remember as best of that experience - were camping out under the stars - perched up on the Landy and the dawns - the gentleness of the growing light, the birdsong and the leisurely breakfasts on our own in the Bush -unforgettable.**

**One morning up in northern Namibia I woke early and lazily pulled back my bit of tent flap - to see - not the dawn - as I had expected but - greyness. Then the greyness moved - it was an Elephant, a very large Matriarch - about six inches**

**away from my nose. I'm not sure who was most surprised by that encounter - her or me. (We survived)**

**So the Elephant outside the Tent prevents the light of the Dawn.**

**Now what I'm about to say is extremely corny - but - I couldn't resist it.**

**Question for you and me**

**What's the Elephant in the Room - (not the Elephant outside the tent) -the unacknowledged obvious thing, the Darkness - preventing us**

**from seeing the Dawn - the Light?**

**Well there are many causes of Darkness in our lives, not all of them by any means our own fault. Some are. Some we have to live with, some it is necessary to escape from.**

**DARKNESS**

**What do I mean by that?**

**Rachel Mann in her book talks about Dazzling Darkness - For her Darkness is - amongst other things - Failure - Loss and Brokenness. She has a remarkable story to tell. She's**

**a Lesbian, Transgender Anglican Priest / and Resident Poet at Manchester Cathedral - with chronic ill health for good measure - she speaks with authority, great honesty and not a hint of self pity about the darkness in her life - in her life of great faith. She also writes extremely well - I do recommend the book.**

**So - let me repeat the Question:**

**When we accept the Light of Christ into our lives, does the darkness disappear?**

**Depends what you mean by Darkness. If our darkness is**

**disobedience to God - as in - not obeying the essential commandments "Love the Lord you God with you your whole heart, soul, mind and body and your neighbour as yourself - then THAT darkness (of disobedience) will snuff out the Light of Christ. The two are incompatible. Only repentance and a restored relationship with God through Christ will enable you to see that light again.**

**What about the sort of Darkness Rachel Mann lives with in her life - and we too - to a greater or lesser extent - if we're brave enough to admit it**

**- the darkness of Failure, Loss and Brokenness?**

**When the Light of Christ enters our life does all THAT darkness disappear - well not always - frankly. Some of it - never.**

**Let me offer you an illustration from this season of Epiphany to further explain my point. I was thinking this week of the Wise Men. The light of the star guided them to the Christ Child. When do you see a star best? In the night - in the dark. So my guess is that they must have done a lot of their travelling by night. They lived**

**with the darkness and followed  
the light.  
(And they got there in the end)**

**There are certain sorts of  
darkness many of us have to  
live with on our spiritual  
journey, not of our own making  
and not the sort that need  
repenting of. They are the  
darkness that life in general  
throws at us**

**What keeps us going is the  
guiding light of Christ though  
even that guiding light can  
become very dim at times.**

**Sometimes complete darkness  
- not of our own making -**

**descends and we stumble  
around hopelessly - not  
knowing which way to turn.  
Then it's necessary to use  
another sense to find a way. We  
need to put our hand in the  
hand of someone else, who will  
guide us, sometimes to do no  
more or less than just be with  
us in that darkness.**

**The whole subject of how to  
cope when the Light goes out  
completely (we might call it the  
Job experience) I shall leave for  
another time - or perhaps one  
of m' learned colleagues will  
get in before me. Feel free.**

**In the meantime:**

**Return to the African Bush with me for a moment. How is our idea of Walking in the Light best imagined? In the beautiful dawns?, which dispel the darkness - or in the wonderful star filled nights, when the Darkness is all around.**

**Isn't our God the God of the Night as well as the Day?**

**Let me remind you that Rachel Mann's book is Titled - improbably you might think - Dazzling Darkness,**

**And I think she is trying to express this same thought -**

**that God is not there despite the darkness but that God is actually in the Darkness - as in a Starry African Night - mostly dark but enough light to see the way.**

**Following Christ features prominently in our readings this morning. When Jesus chose his disciples he knew that they would need to follow him through Thick and Thin - Light and Dark, and he expects the same of us.**

**Let me finish by answering my opening question - Walking in the Light is not always the easy Daytime experience - it is more**

**often than not Walking in the  
not so well lit Dark.**

**Let us pray**

**May God, the Holy Spirit,  
enable us to Live in the Light of  
Christ - whether that is in the  
full midday glare and warmth  
of his generous love - or in the  
darkness of the night with the  
star-light of his wonderfully  
persistent and constant love.  
Amen**