Light in the darkness

I will begin my celebration of Easter crouched around a fire in the gardens outside Chelmsford Cathedral trying to light a large candle from its flames. When the candle is lit I will hold it aloft, process into the darkened church, and proclaim the ancient Easter proclamation that Christ is the light in the darkness.

In the New Testament all the really important things seem to happen in the dark.

Jesus is born in the night. When Judas betrays him and he is arrested, night has fallen. When he dies on the cross there is darkness over the land. And when Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb on Easter morning we are told it is still dark.

This is no coincidence. The death and resurrection of Jesus is best understood as a cosmic victory over the powers of evil, death and darkness. Speaking of the coming of Christ, Isaiah says that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. When Jesus is born, Simeon says he is the light for all people.

That's why Christians all over the world celebrate Easter in the night by kindling a fire and lighting a candle and proclaiming Jesus as the light of the world. This is also why Christian people today find hope – light in their own personal darkness – through Jesus Christ. We do not find God absent or indifferent to our sufferings. We find he is there with us. Christ is, therefore, not the light at the end of a dark tunnel, but the light to see by, "a lamp to our feet and a light to our path," a candle to hold in the darkness.

The Risen Christ is also light for the world. As I write this I don't know what is going to happen with our Brexit negotiations. By Easter we are supposed to know; the end of March deadline will have passed. However, there is every possibility we might still be in the dark. The way of Christ can shed light on this as well, showing us the values and principles we must hold onto even if the path ahead is not clear.

+ Stephen.

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