

Theme: Christ our Light

Worship leader: Silvia Purdie

**Sunday 10 April 2016, Cashmere Presbyterian Church**

**Call to Worship:**

In the beginning was the Word

***Jesus is the Word***

the Word became flesh

***Light came into darkness***

Darkness tried to put it out

***but Light shines brighter***

Jesus said "I am the light of the world

***Follow me and never walk in darkness***

You will have the light of life!"

***Jesus is the Light of the World***

Praise to Christ, the Word!

**Song (With One Voice 669): I am the light of the World**

**Dramatic Reading: Acts 9**

**Bible reading: John 21:1-14**

**Sermon: 'Light breaks through'**

**Song: Shine, Jesus, Shine**

**Prayers for others**

*During our prayer time you are invited to pray for person next to you:*

Heavenly Father, risen Jesus, loving Spirit, bless ... this morning.

Pour out your grace on *her/him*. Fill *her/him* with your healing light.

Shine into places of darkness. Clearly show *her/him* the way ahead. Amen.

## **Reflection 1: The Damascus Road**

We have two great Bible stories today. This is the first one. A super famous one, about a man meeting with God and being really really changed by that meeting. It's called the Damascus Rd, and when people have an experience in their own lives that was a significant turning point in their lives they might describe it as a Damascus Rd experience.

So, there we have this guy Saul - mostly we call him Paul. Saul in the Jewish language, Paul in the Roman language. There he is walking along with his armed guard, on the road between Jerusalem and Damascus.

Back then, under Roman rule, you could walk from Jerusalem to Damascus. It's nearly 220 kilometres, which is about from here to Waimate. So that's several days walk, more than a week.

These days of course you cannot walk from Jerusalem to Damascus.

Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, Damascus is the capital of Syria. What's left of it. Syria is at war with itself and Damascus is kind of a wreck, and probably the most dangerous place to be on the planet right now. To get there from Jerusalem you would have to go through either Lebanon or Jordan, and there are big walls, no-man zones filled with land mines, and the only people who can cross the borders are UN peace keepers.

2,000 years ago they walked. Though it was still a good idea to travel armed. But the soldiers who travelled with Paul didn't have the right kind of protection against what happened. They were nearly there. Perhaps they had paused to admire the view down from the hill into the wide valley with the beautiful ancient city spread out before them. When suddenly Paul was struck down by what the Bible described as "a light from heaven". And out of the brilliant light a voice spoke. This was not a private vision of Paul's - the guard heard it too, saw the light too.

And the Bible goes on to tell about what happened to Paul next, how he was blinded by this light for days, only cured when a local Christian came and prayed for him, and how Paul was utterly changed by his meeting with this brilliant light and this voice.

Paul was convinced that the voice and the light was two things at the same time, two things that he would never have believed could be one and the same thing ..

the light and the voice was obviously God! not just any old foreign God, but the God that Paul had worshiped all his life, the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of creation, the Lord of the Jews.

But the light and the voice was also Jesus. Paul probably had never met Jesus, but when he heard that voice he knew that it was Jesus talking to him. From that moment on, when Paul used the words "The Lord", he meant by that that the man who had been Jesus of Nazareth was now one and same

as The Lord of the Jews, the Lord of heaven and earth, The Lord God, Yahweh, of whom King David wrote in Psalm 27  
“The Lord is my light and my salvation, the Lord is the stronghold of my life”

I will come back to this another time, but for now I would like to ask you to talk to your neighbour for a moment. I have a question for you

**How is God like light?**

**When Jesus said that he was the light of the world, what do you think he meant by that?**

Discuss:

What is light like?                      What is God made of?

Is God like light?                      What does light do?

**Bible reading:** John 21:1-14

**Sermon: The breakfast Barbeque at the Lake**

Time for our second story. This one happened 3 years before young Saul was hit over the head with a flash of light. This story happened back in home base, back at the lake where it all started. The disciples had gone back home, gone back to doing what they did before Jesus whisked them off their feet and all over the place. They went fishing. And they fished their socks off all night, with nothing to show for it.

Then the darkness faded and dawn came. This was a beautiful dawn. Ever been beside a lake at dawn? Ever seen a large body of water absolutely smooth, completely still? Chris & I lived in Taupo for a couple of years as young newly weds, and my favourite thing to do was to get out of bed early if the day dawned clear and calm, and drag my husband down to the lake for a picnic breakfast. To me the shimmer of whity blue of a still lake is one of the most beautiful things in the world, and at dawn, when pinkness hangs in the air, when mountains reflect purple in the distance, when mist swirls over a thermal area ... ah, incredible.

That is my picture of this morning with Peter, his brother, and their best friends ...

They heard someone calling to them from the shore. Have you ever tried calling across a still lake? Sound just zims out across the water, and you can hear someone speaking when they are so far away you can hardly see them!

“No fish, ha?” the person calls

“Nope!” they reply

“Try throwing the net out on the right side of the boat” comes the voice across the lake.

These were men with nothing left to lose, so why the heck not, I guess, and they were too tired to argue, so they threw the net out on the right side of the boat. And suddenly fish are tussling and the net is heaving and they are

suddenly very wide awake, and they think to peer back to the person on the shore.

In my mind's eye all I can see is the sun rising over the lake as they look back at the shore. If you've ever seen the sun rise over water you will know how intensely brilliant it is, how the light engulfs you from above and below and the more you try to look at it the more blinding it is.

I haven't got time to go into the rest of the story, but it is a great story, about Peter leaving the fish & the boat and hurling himself into the water at the crazy suggestion that the man on the shore was Jesus, and all of them dragging in the net and counting the fish and eating the fish in the most magnificent but simple barbecue ever, as the sun shone and birds sang and the lake lapped at their feet. The point of the story for Peter was how he was transformed that morning by meeting the risen Jesus. We heard about his conversation with the Lord, and how that changed him into a new man, a leader of men.

So there you have it, two stories, Peter and Paul, and how they met the risen Jesus and how that meeting utterly turned their lives around.

We are drawing this morning on the idea of LIGHT as one way of understanding God. Both meetings with God we've heard about today were experiences of God's light breaking into a place of darkness. Light burst forth, light burst through, into the mind and heart and soul. What happened for Peter and Paul was not just a warm fuzzy moment when they felt loved and affirmed. The inbreaking of light from heaven was confronting, demanding. We are loved not just for our own sake but for the saving of the world!

Being a Christian is not just having my own light to shine. Faith is not shining my own candle, my torch, into a dark world. The light of Christ actually comes from somewhere else, outside of me. I don't own it. I don't have much in my own self. My own light will flutter and fade. My battery will run down. I can't do this on my own. I am not the source of light.

Meeting up with the risen Jesus is a breaking into me by God. And from then on we can shine in our own lives with the life and love of Christ. It's up to me to keep the channel open, to keep plugging my rechargeable battery back into the source, to not let the God-light get squished. It doesn't matter how old you are or how fit you are or how clever you are ... everyone, anyone, can shine with the light of Christ.