

3 days 'til Christmas.

- Have you got all your presents ready?
- How about the ham?
- Have you got your Christmas tree yet?
For the Brumptons, Christmas isn't Christmas, until we cut down a tree...
- How about your jobs?
Have you worked hard to get all the jobs tidied up, so you can have a few days off?

But more importantly: Is your heart ready for Jesus???

I'm not talking about "Is your heart ready for a little baby... Is your heart ready for The Lord"? You see, when we celebrate the **first** coming of Jesus, it's also a reminder that Jesus is coming again. And are we ready for that???

You see, part of the Christmas story, is the story of John the Baptist. And his message, is to prepare for the coming of Jesus... And as I said, "It's not so much about preparing for a baby – it's about "preparing for The Lord".

And the few verses we're reading today, is a prophecy, given by Zechariah (John's dad). And he is prophesying over his son (John) (at his birth).

Luke 1:76-79

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the
Most High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his
ways,

⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the
shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,

As we prepare for Christmas;

As we prepare for the coming of Your Son,
may we know Your Tender Mercy.

May You prepare our hearts,
as John was sent to prepare the hearts
of the people of old...

Speak to us now, through Your word we pray.

Amen.

Righto:

So, John the Baptist was to prepare the way for Jesus' coming.
⁷⁷ to give [the people] knowledge of salvation in the forgiveness of sins.

This is the only way to be saved – to repent of sin, and in the mercy of God, to be forgiven.

But Jesus didn't only come to save. Jesus came, to “enlighten”. You see, part of the salvation experience – part of being saved, is being bathed in “light”. “Spiritual light”. Being awakened to the dawning of Jesus, and following Him (in the Light)...

So, this Christmas season (today and some more on Christmas Day), we're going to be focusing on Jesus as “The Light of The World”.

Now, the one thing I have never missed about my farming career, is the constant 3a.m. wake-up alarm, day-after-day; week-after-week when the spraying needed to be done.

When I was working at the Ag College, the whole farm was on a flood-plain. And to control erosion, they did strip cropping. A lot of the strips were less than 100m wide. And so you'd be trying to spray out-of-control weeds in one strip, with new crop on both sides of the field you're trying to spray. So we had to spray it when there was no wind/cool...

And this is before the days of GPS guidance (yes, I am that old). What we had for guidance was called a “Blob-Dobber” ... Out at the end of the boom, the Blob-Dobber would generate a big blob of bubbles, and every 30 or 50 metres, it would drop a big blob of bubbles on the ground, and if the wind didn’t blow the bubbles away, and if the sun didn’t melt the bubbles, you could see it.

But of course, this means you couldn’t spray at night. So, it was really common for me, to set the alarm for 3a.m.

- *I would get up at 3 a.m.;*
- *Eat breakfast;*
- *Drive into work;*
- *Unlock the key-box so I could get a key for the tractor;*
- *I’d take it to the chemical shed and mix the first tank-load;*
- *I’d drive the tractor and boomspray down the paddock*
- *I’d unfold the boom;*

And if I’d timed everything just right, the sunrise would be giving me just enough light for me to see that all the nozzles were working;

- *I’d have enough light to see the edge of the paddock as I sprayed the first run;*
- *By the time I got to the other end, the sun would be bright enough for me to see the foam marker for the 2nd run...*

That’s what I thought about when I read today’s Bible reading. About how **the sunrise shall visit us from on high;** and about how it is a light to guide our feet

It reminded me of the multitude of times I have longed for the sunrise to come, because I could not see the way, until the sun came up....

I just love V⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
Think about that for a moment: the tender mercy of our
God Isn't God supposed to be harsh and ridiculing and out to
get us??? No. because of the tender mercy of our
God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

Don't you just love that image – Jesus as the Sun-Rise,
bringing light, into our world...

I guess what you really think of that image depends on
whether you're a morning person, or whether you really don't
want to be conscious at Sunrise...

Are you a morning person? Or are you a night person and
absolutely **not** a morning person?

Me: I'm a morning person. And morning people (I don't
mean to be judgie), but we morning people: we find it really
hard to understand why anyone would want to stay in bed, 3
hours after the sun's come up. How crazy is that? Especially
in Summer. **Night** time is for sleeping. Morning time – that's

the best time of day – yeah, **but** try telling that to someone who's not a morning person...

And that got me thinking:

Spiritually, there are morning people, and there are night people. And of course, this has got nothing to do, with whether you like getting up early or not. For some, it's the best thing ever, that Jesus (the sunrise) has visited us from on high...

Let me be really clear here – It doesn't matter how good your headlights on your car are, or how good your torch or spotlights are – when it comes to light, you cannot beat the pure shining light of the sun...

So spiritually, we were living in darkness. But then comes the Spiritual Sunrise. **Jesus** has come – pouring His light into the world (Pure/bright light)... You know, we tend to think of Jesus holding a little candle. That's not the sort of light we're talking about. It's the Sunrise.

And some people are “Oh, the Sun's here... Go away – leave me alone... And they pull the curtains to keep Jesus out...”

But then there's those who long for the morning, and **welcome** the morning... “Jesus has come. There's Light. We can see...”

So,,,

Spiritually speaking, if Jesus is The Light of The World – if Jesus is the sunrise that visits us from on high? What is the darkness?

Well, Jesus came: ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

What a dreadful image... To sit in darkness (to have no vision); To sit in the shadow of death...

It's an image, not so much of sleeping, but merely existing – to sit, is your position – it is a non-transient position – it is where one is..... To sit in darkness; To sit in the shadow of death...

When sin entered the world, the **consequence** of sin, is death. When a person sins, by rejecting Jesus, and doing wrong,,,, with that sin, comes death. And so, the inherent (spiritual) state of man, is a state of spiritual darkness. Why? Because we are **all** sinners, and therefore overshadowed by death. The natural state of man, is to **sit in darkness and in the shadow of death**

The natural state of man, can only end in death.

But, hear the good news: Our God, is a God of **tender mercy**. And because of His **tender mercy**, there has been a spiritual sunrise. Jesus has come.”.... With what purpose? To enlighten. To light up the path. **to guide our feet into the way of peace.**”

Under **the shadow of death**: No peace... But the sunrise from on High, lights the path, to **guide our feet into the way of peace.**

You know, at Christmas time, a lot of the carols talk about “peace”. And even those who want to remove all religion – who want to scrub every hint of Jesus from Christmas – even they want to focus on peace...

And many people search for peace. They **crave** peace in all sorts of ways, but they never find genuine peace. Do you know why? It’s because **spiritually**, they’re not a morning person... The spiritual curtains are shut. The Sunrise has visited us from on High – Ohw... Shut that out....

The light of Jesus, isn’t like a little dull light on your iPhone... It’s the sunrise... That’s how effective Jesus is, if only we’d pull back the blinds, and let the light in.

But even so, **light** never drags us into peace. It **guides** us into peace. The way to experience peace with God – The way to experience peace in life, is to walk in the light of Jesus. To follow Him in His ways of righteousness and love.

And my prayer, for this Christmas, is that we would:

- **not** shut out the Sunrise;
- pull back the curtains and let the Son in; and

- let the bright light of Jesus, **guide our feet into the way of peace.**

Be prepared for the coming of Jesus, by **welcoming** the Light, and walking **in** the Light.

Amen.