



*The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.
Isaiah 9:2 9(NIV)*

As the winter solstice nears, Dylan Thomas' incomparable words come to mind:

*Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

Light symbolizes so many qualities in our minds. Without the warmth of the sun, life could not exist, and our beautiful, abundant earth would orbit as a barren, frozen wasteland. Philosophers consider light as wisdom, which leads us to the path of purity and righteousness. The light of Truth surpasses all illumination, and shows the way to salvation. These principles have governed humankind since the dawn of civilization, and become manifest in different creeds.

As the winter darkness encroaches, Christmas decorations appear, in the guise of colored and white bulbs, and, more recently, blown-up balloons of snowmen and Santas. Fir trees stand festooned with ornaments and strings of tinsel and store-bought sources of radiance. Yule logs crackle as we gather with loved ones, and candles flicker in windows as beacons to lead us home. Week by week, the tapirs of the Advent wreaths mark our growing awareness of the season. We stage a protest against the dying of the light, armed with electricity and other currencies.

*Send forth your light and your truth,
let them guide me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain
to the place where you dwell.
Psalm 43:3 (NIV)*

Once the solstice has passed, the daylight returns incrementally, without any human intervention. One of the most beautiful truths about existence is that we can choose to take a stand against the darkness.

The dawn of Christmas morning symbolizes something different to each of us. This observance varies in so many cultures and traditions, yet light remains a constant. The universal Star of Bethlehem guides each of us towards our own salvation, should we choose to follow it.

Merry Christmas.

Father God, When your precious Son became a tiny baby in a stable in Bethlehem in poverty and simplicity, you changed our world. As we imagine those surroundings, we join with the shepherds and the wise men in wonder and praise. We thank you for our material lives, praise you for our spiritual lives, and trust in you for our eternal life. Amen.