HOPE CHAPEL | GAWLER | THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

And the darkness has not overcome it.

Sunday 25 October 2026 | 11AM Gawler | Isaiah 8–9 | Luke 4 | Mark 5

Big Idea: *The darkness in this world and in our own lives has no power over the light of Jesus Christ. He doesn't shine on our darkness from a safe distance. He crosses the lake, walks up the hill, and comes to us - and the darkness cannot stand it.*

Light in a Dark Room

The message opened with the lights going out. One small flame - barely a centimetre tall - held up at the front of a large, dark room. And it was visible from the very back.

That was the whole point. Darkness has no power over light. You can fill a room with darkness all you like, but the moment even the smallest light appears, the darkness doesn't fight back. It just vanishes.

Darkness has no power over light whatsoever. None. Not even a little.

And that is exactly what this morning was about - a particular light that came into the world to make the darkness disappear. Not just the darkness of the world, but the darkness we carry inside our own lives.

The Quiet Darkness We Carry

When you walked in this morning and someone said "how are you going?", you probably said yeah, good. It's the Australian way. But in Australia that phrase can mean anything from genuinely well, right through to I haven't slept properly in months.

The American writer Henry David Thoreau said it in 1854: the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. Notice the word quiet. We don't let it out. We're not obvious. We don't make a fuss. But most of us are living with something - and it ebbs and flows as we go through life.

> *You know the feeling. 3am. Awake, and your mind just goes. Will this ever stop? Is it going to get worse? Why did I say that? What if that scan comes back badly? Will I ever sleep through the night again? Our minds go looking for somewhere to get a little rest. A little relief. A little light.*

The good news is there is light. And it was always meant for the people in the dark first.

THE PROMISE | Isaiah 9 - The Great Light

Isaiah wrote 700 years before Christ - yet he described the coming of Jesus with such clarity that when Jesus arrived and fulfilled it, it was unmistakable. First, the darkness is named:

> **Isaiah 8:22** *And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and they will be thrust into thick darkness.*

And then - one of the greatest single words in all of Scripture:

> **Isaiah 9:1–3** *But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness - on them a light has shone. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy.*

But. That one word carries the weight of a gospel turn. The darkness is real. The anguish is real. And then - but.

Zebulun and Naphtali - The Darkest Place First

The towns named in Isaiah's promise might sound unfamiliar - Zebulun and Naphtali. But their story matters. These were the tribal towns at the far north of Israel, right on the border. First in the line of fire whenever an invading army came. Overrun again and again. Split up. Scattered. Taken into foreign lands. So many non-Jewish people had settled in their towns that the region eventually became known as "Galilee of the Gentiles" - no longer considered pure.

Generations of darkness. Generations of fear. The most affected, the most abandoned, the most overtaken people in all of Israel.

And they are exactly who God made his promise to.

Where does God bring his light first? The darkest place in all of Israel.

Imagine standing at the edge of one of those small towns, before dawn, in the freezing dark, watching the road. You can't sleep - you never sleep well. And then on the horizon you see it. Thin, grey, then orange, then gold. Warmth on your face that you've almost forgotten. And it's not an army coming to destroy you this time. It's a man, walking up the hill with the sun rising behind him. And he moves through the village - teaching, healing. And the news travels ahead of him the way news travels in small towns: have you heard him? Have you seen him?

THE FULFILMENT | Luke 4 - Today This Scripture Is Fulfilled

Then one day he comes home to Nazareth. The place where he grew up. Right where Isaiah said he would be, 700 years later.

> **Luke 4:16–19** *He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

He rolled the scroll back up. Handed it to the attendant. Sat down. And said:

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Seven hundred years of waiting. And this.

That word liberty - liberty to the captives, liberty to the oppressed - carries something extraordinary. It means rest, relief, pardon, forgiveness, release, and freedom. Everything people in that room were desperate for. Everything we are desperate for in our own ways now. The light had finally dawned.

> *A sunrise doesn't stay where it starts. It keeps moving. It's always sunrise somewhere on the planet. That light began in one small synagogue in one forgotten corner of the world, and the rest of the New Testament is the story of it spreading - town by town, country by country - until it reaches a place more than 13,000 kilometres away. Cohen Street, Gawler. Right here, this morning. That same light has dawned.*

THE LIGHT IN THE DARK PLACES | Mark 5 - The Man Called Legion

Jesus wasn't just talk. He went to the dark places. And the story of the man called Legion is one of the most dramatic examples in the Gospels.

He lived on the far side of a lake, in the country of the Gerasenes. The town had given up on him. Demons had taken hold of him - not one, but thousands. When Jesus asked his name, the answer came back: Legion. Because there were so many. For a long time he had worn no clothes, lived naked among the tombs of the dead, crying out at night. Nobody could hold him. Nobody could help him. And he would not help himself.

> **Mark 5:6–7** *And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.*

The darkness saw the light coming - and it panicked. The demons started screaming. They fell down. They begged.

> *Don't ever picture Jesus fighting anyone - because he isn't. It's not a contest. Ultimate power, ultimate goodness, ultimate love. Jesus is simply there - and that is enough. The darkness cannot stand the light.*

Jesus speaks. Legion obeys. And the townspeople, who had been hearing that man cry all night for years, went to look when it went silent. They found him sitting at the feet of Jesus - clothed and completely sane. Still. Quiet. Looking up at the one who set him free.

Liberty to the captives. The light shines in the darkness - and the darkness has not overcome it.

What This Means for You

Very few of us will be chained and screaming and naked among the tombs. But there are times in every life when we need exactly as much help and freedom as this man did. And Jesus doesn't shrug his shoulders when we're in a dark place.

He sees you personally. He knows you better than you know yourself - because he created you, intentionally, and he loves you. He can bring you freedom, healing, and restoration.

And when the darkness doesn't lift at the speed you want - which is so often the case - that does not mean he's not there. It means he is sitting right beside you. It means we have to trust his timing, because he sees the whole arc from birth to death. He knows what he's doing.

> **Reflect:** *3am is real. The quiet desperation is real. But you don't have to sit in it alone. What is the one thing you are carrying right now that you haven't told anyone? Could you invite Christ into it today - no special prayer, no ritual, just an honest conversation?*

A friend who passed away a few years ago used to say: at three in the morning I still wake up with certain things. But the only way I get back to sleep is to invite Christ right into that moment. Three in the morning - Christ doesn't go to bed. He just wants to be with you.

> **Matthew 7:7–8** *Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.*

It's ready. The door is there. All you have to do is knock.

What the Light Cost

None of this was free. The freedom Jesus brings came at an extraordinary cost - one we will never fully understand.

On a Friday afternoon outside Jerusalem, Matthew says darkness came over all the land. The light of the world went into the dark for each of us. He carried our darkness up a hill. He was crucified, died, and was buried.

And then Sunday came. The greatest day the earth has ever seen. John says Mary came to the tomb early while it was still dark. She couldn't see. But she knew the stone was rolled away. The tomb was empty.

The light had barely risen before anyone was awake to see it. The darkness had done its worst - and it had not overcome the light of Jesus Christ.

That is the gospel. The darkness doesn't get the last word. Jesus doesn't shine on our darkness from a safe distance. He crosses the lake and comes to us. He stops in the crowd and notices every single one of us. He walked right into the dark, took it on himself, and came out the other side.

So that you never have to sit at three in the morning alone and wondering again.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

Use these on your own during the week, or with your LifeGroup.

1. Henry David Thoreau said, "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Is that true of you in this season? What is the thing you're carrying quietly that you haven't let out?

2. God's promise through Isaiah went to the darkest, most abandoned towns in Israel first. What does it tell you about God's character that he goes to the darkest places first?

3. Isaiah wrote 700 years before Jesus arrived - and the fulfilment matched the prophecy exactly. How does that kind of evidence affect your trust in what God has said about your future?

4. Jesus said in the synagogue at Nazareth: "Today this scripture is fulfilled." Liberty, rest, release, forgiveness, freedom - which of those words lands most personally for you right now?

5. The man called Legion - stripped of everything, living among the dead - was set completely free by one encounter with Jesus. What area of your life feels most like it needs that kind of freedom today?

6. The message ended with the cross - the light going into the dark for us, and coming out the other side. How does the resurrection change the way you face your 3am moments?

Key Scriptures This Week

- Isaiah 8:22 - Distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish - they will be thrust into thick darkness
- Isaiah 9:1–2 - But there will be no gloom. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light
- Luke 4:18 - The Spirit of the Lord is upon me - to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind
- Luke 4:21 - Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing
- Mark 5:6–8 - When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him
- John 1:5 - The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it
- Matthew 7:7 - Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened