

# *A Christmas Message* from Bishop Mark



Living in an area of LED lightbulbs and powerful searchlights it is easy for us to miss how fragile and vulnerable light sources were in the ancient world. A candle could be snuffed out, a torch could be extinguished by the wind, an oil lamp made of clay could be dropped and smashed.

It's one reason why the Jewish story of Hanukkah – the account of a supply of olive oil sufficient for one day which miraculously lit the re-dedicated temple for eight days – resonates so profoundly with members of that community.

Perhaps because of this fragility the ancients were also aware of the power of light. Light protected you from danger, it guided your way and strengthened your hope.

This combination of apparent fragility and profound strength is evident in the first Chapter of John's Gospel. John meditates on the events of Christmas. In Jesus the true light, which gives light to everyone, comes into the world (verse 9). Yet that same world does not recognise Him for who He is (verse 10). But to all who do recognise and receive Him, there is the power to become God's children (verse 12). "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." (verse 5).

Here is the wonder of Christmas: the vulnerable baby lying in the feed-trough is also God's eternal Word. This Word is powerful enough to hold together the entire universe; strong enough to still a raging storm, mighty enough to defeat sin and death forever.

Where do we find the strength to confront the kind of evil that was unleashed on Bondi Beach the evening of Sunday December 14? Perhaps where we least expect to do so; in the light of the world, whose apparent weakness is strong enough to give life and hope and a future to all who believe in Him. Even now He commissions His followers to bring that same light to their world by mourning with those who mourn and by making peace (see Matthew 5:1-16).

*Almighty God,  
you have made us and all  
things to serve you:  
come quickly to save us,  
so that wars and violence  
shall end  
and your children may  
live in peace,  
honouring one another  
with justice and love;  
through Jesus Christ,  
your Son our Lord,  
Who lives with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now & forever.*

*Amen*