

W3 | D4

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

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When I was a kid, early on Saturday mornings I would gather with neighborhood friends, and—with our parents’ permission—we would ride the streetcar up to the Ambassador Theatre in Gwynn Oak Junction, Baltimore. When the movie was about to begin, we had to walk through a thick velvet curtain to enter the theater. Immediately, we’d bump up against the back row. Only after our eyes adjusted to the dark could we find our seats.

After the show was over, again there was no vestibule to ease ourselves out of darkness and into the light of day. The sun was so dazzling outside that we’d stumble, rub our eyes, and try not to bump into things. The brilliance was a jolt to our senses.

I often think about that experience when I read 1 Peter 2:9, “Proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (ESV). The spiritual contrast Peter is explaining here is akin to exiting a pitch-black theater and being hit with blinding sunlight.

This verse also describes the jolt I felt when God called me out of my own darkness. You see, more than five decades ago, I broke my neck in a diving accident that left me a quadriplegic. Without use of my hands or legs, I plummeted into deep depression, convinced that God had abandoned me. The depression was like a thick darkness, and it lasted a long time.

Then, Christian friends opened the Bible and shone into my soul John 8:12, where Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

It sounded hopeful, and I wanted to believe, yet Jesus’ claim seemed audacious. But a friend explained, “If Jesus loved you enough to die a torturous death to save you, then doesn’t that prove he is trustworthy? That his intentions for you are good?”

It was a jolt to my senses—like parting a heavy curtain and stepping out into a light so bright it illuminated everything. I realized God took no pleasure in my paralysis, but it was part of his mysterious yet trustworthy plan for my life. When the eyes of my heart adjusted to God’s hope-filled light, I felt as though I had awakened from a long nightmare. And although I would remain paralyzed in a wheelchair, my soul would never be the same. God had “called [me] out of darkness into his marvelous light.” It was just like Jesus shouting into a dark grave, “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43).

It’s why I love Advent. The world was impossibly dark before the birth of Christ. But then the Light of the World arrived, changing everything. Advent reminds us that “the true light that gives light to everyone [has come] into the world” (John 1:9). During this dark-become-light season, part the curtain and hear Christ’s call: “Come out!” Then, step into the sunshine of his glorious salvation. ✨

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