**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

**CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

**EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY’S THEME**

***Introducing the Gospel***

*Nativity (John 1:1-14)*

The prologue to John’s Gospel sets out the mystery of the incarnation: ‘the Word became flesh and lived among us’. In this prologue the incarnate Word is described as ‘the light of all people’. This light ‘shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it’. Then later in his Gospel John develops the theme of Jesus as the Light of the World.

The image to stimulate reflection on John’s powerful image of Jesus as the light of all people is *Christmas lights*.

***Core extract from the Gospel (John 1: 2-5; for reflection throughout the week)***

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through him,

and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being in him was life,

and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness did not overcome it.

***Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)***

Lord Jesus Christ,

you are the light of the world.

Shine in our hearts

and bring your light to our lives;

now and always.

Amen.

**READING NEXT SUNDAY’S GOSPEL**

**John 1: 1-14**

**The Gospel According to John**

**The Word Became Flesh**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

**ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

***Dwelling with the text (John 1: 1-14)***

Begin exploring John’s powerful images in the prologue to his Gospel by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

* What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
* What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
* What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
* What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

***Thinking and talking***

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

* What connections do you make with the opening words ‘In the beginning’?
* What do you make of the claim ‘All things came into being through him’?
* How do you understand the word ‘light’ in this passage?
* What do you make of the claim that ‘the darkness did not overcome it’?
* What does this narrative say for us today?

***Using your Bible***

Explore the image of light in John’s Gospel.

* John 3: 19-21
* John 8: 12
* John 9: 5
* John 11: 9-10
* John 12: 35-36, 46

Explore connections with the Old Testament.

* Genesis 1: 1-3
* Psalm 27: 1

***Exploring online***

Widen your exploration of John’s powerful image of light in the prologue to his Gospel by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

* Prologue to John’s Gospel
* Jesus the light in classical art
* Christmas lights

***Drawing on experience***

The image to stimulate reflection on the powerful image of light in the prologue to John’s Gospel is *Christmas lights.* Draw on your own experience of Christmas lights. For example:

* Have you used lights at Christmas?
* When have Christmas lights made an impression on you?
* Have you seen lights used to good effect in churches at Christmas?

What have you learned about Christmas lights?

***Creating and making***

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by the image of light in the prologue to John’s Gospel.

* Create a display of Christmas lights.
* Create a collage of pictures of Christmas lights.
* Make a Christmas crib scene with the Light of the World in the manger.
* Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Christ the King.



**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel.

We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary’s Centre in Wales.



The scripture quotations contained in these materials are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised Edition, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and is used with permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © Leslie J. Francis, 2021

Canon Theologian Liverpool Cathedral

with sponsorship and support from

St Mary’s Centre, Wales