

"I am the light of the world." John 8; 12.

He came into the world in a time of dense darkness. The moral darkness of that age threatened civilization itself. Slavery, tyranny and oppression made the lot of the common man so hard and bitter that life was no longer desirable. Men and women from the depths of despair saw in His face a new day.

What do we see in a human face? Louisa M. Alcott's Mother's face said, "Can I help you?" Some faces are so unselfish and so anxious to be of help, they speak their warmth to all who see.

Below is a short extract giving what Charles Dickens saw in the face of Scrooge.

"External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, nor wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow and hail, and sleet, could boast of advantage over him in only one respect. They often 'came down' handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

"Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?' No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life enquired the way to such and such a place of Scrooge."

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What a difference when men looked into the face of Jesus. They saw in His face a light, a moral and spiritual light that warmed the cockles of their hearts. The poor and miserable were drawn to that face like iron filings to a magnet.

What a precious thing a light can be to men benighted. Two men were arguing over the merits of the sun and the moon. One said the moon was of most use to men because it shined at night when they needed a light most.

I remember one occasion when I was away from home on a cold rainy day, I tried a short cut to get home quicker. I went across a dark swamp with a large stream running through it. I was fortunate to get across the stream before dark, for it had no bridge. But when I reached the flat land on the other side night fell on that whole flat land like a thick wet blanket. It was so dark the mule I was riding refused to go on. When I got off and felt with my hands I found he had stopped near a wagon shed and cotton house on the plantation. It was shelter and he chose to stay there till it got lighter. My top coat was too wet to keep me warm and I could not sleep much. About two in the morning I saw it was growing lighter. I later found that the moon had risen and was shining through the thick clouds. To men who have lived all their lives in a great city that would have been darkness. But to me it was light, blessed welcome light. I could see the path and found my way to the road and then home.

But the darkness of His day was so dense that men condemned the Light of the World. They chose darkness rather than light. Would we condemn a man as holy as He if He came to live among us? We do have some as blind as any who lived in His day. But I do not believe the majority would. We

have leaned to examine truth before condemning it. This is one of the blessings that has come out of religious liberty. Freedom of speech has taught us at last that the man who differs with us may be right. We still have men blind enough to condemn all who differ with them, without even a hearing. But these are in a minority in our land. We cannot turn our backs on the experience of the last century. We cannot deny that free speech has made us the most enlightened people on earth. How can we listen to men of so little reason as to want it curbed?

In some parts of the world today a man as holy as the Prophet of Nazareth would be condemned. For He would be certain to oppose the tyranny and oppression of these lands, just as He would oppose the injustice of our own. People who will not allow free discussion of truth are painting over the windows of their own house with thick dark paint.

Will we reap light or darkness from the present world struggle? We know we have already reaped true scientific light. We made more progress in medical science during the Second World War than we had made in a quarter of a century of peace. We have made the theory of atomic fission a practical fact. We have ushered in the atomic age. But our advance in the use of things we already had is just as astounding. Radio and Television have brought the world to the door of the man who lived in seclusion. Electricity and the internal combustion engine have brought about the greatest revolution in the daily lives of people since the dawn of civilization.

But will we reap moral and spiritual truth from this struggle? Some are very pessimistic. We know that many parts of the world today are darker morally and spiritually

than they were before the last war. They have closed their eyes and stopped their ears to light and truth. These will surely reap darkness instead of light. Even in our own free land we have men who are ready to deny the right of free speech to those who oppose them. We are so afraid of the darkness that is all about us that we want to close our own windows to keep it out. We forget that closing the windows to free speech will keep out the light also. If we listen to the alarmists we might even resort to the same tyranny that we condemn so loudly in others.

It could be that the blindness of others ^{may} make us cherish free speech more. It might turn out like the dog the man carried to the show. When they laughed at his dog he told them it might be a good thing to have one dog to show people the kind of a dog a dog ought not to be. The totalitarian lands have shown us the kind of government in action that people ought not to have.

But these lands do not know the blessing of free speech. So far we still have free speech on most lands that had given it a fair trial. The curb on free speech in most lands today was there already.