

"Arise and Shine!" - Isaiah 60:1-6

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho

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Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Thy presence to hear Thy Holy Word. We pray Thee so to open our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit that, through the preaching of Thy Word, we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and to grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for the sake of Christ. Amen.

Dear Members of the Body of Christ,

Yesterday was the 12th day of Christmas and the day set aside by the Church as The Epiphany of our Lord. Consequently, we have moved into the Epiphany season of the Church year, a season emphasizing the Light of the world being revealed to the Gentiles as the Wise Men from the East brought their gifts to the Christ Child in the house at Bethlehem and the beginning of the ministry of our Lord some thirty years later with His Baptism in the Jordan River.

The sermon text for this day is the Old Testament Reading for The Epiphany of our Lord, Isaiah 60:1-6. Please listen to that portion of God's Word, doing so under the theme ...

... *Arise and Shine!*

Arise, shine; for your Light has come, and the Glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and His Glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your Light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms. Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Mid'ian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Thus far the Word of the Lord our God.

The words *arise and shine* may be heard in different contexts and certainly have different meanings and receptions by the individual. For example, those who have served in the military and gone through basic training might recall hearing those words very early in the morning, while it was still dark. A burly drill sergeant marches into the barracks, turns on the lights, and breaks the silence of the night with the words, *Rise and shine; it's time for PT!* At that time, those words were not necessarily what someone wanted to hear. On the other hand, a different setting and occasion might bring great joy and anticipation. When a mom or dad comes into a child's room while it is still dark

on Christmas morning and says, *Rise and shine; it's time for opening presents!* However, recognizing that the situation is usually reversed, we would probably agree that it is more likely that the children will run down the hall, while it is still dark on Christmas morning, and into their parent's bedroom awakening them with their own rendition of *Rise and shine*.

The Lord our God, writing to His Church through the prophet Isaiah, extends the invitation to *Arise and shine*. Like the children of Christmas, the Church wanted and wants to hear these words. And although they take the form of a command, the words are not Law, but Gospel. These Good News words are like the command of Jesus when He took the cup when He had supped and said, *Take and eat*. Pure grace on the Lord's part, without any of your or my doing. With the command to *Arise and Shine* comes the power of God to do so. The Church is directed to wake up from within a world of darkness due to sin and to receive the Light of the world and to bask in the Glory of the Lord, with both the Light and the Glory being Incarnate Word of God - the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

The words of our text are part of the prophecy of God, given through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, is directed to the Church - the Body of believers whose Head is Jesus. Since there are many such believers here this morning, we are able to read this section of the Holy Scriptures and make some applications to our individual and congregational lives.

In chapter 59 - the one just before our text - Isaiah describes the situation of mankind. Man's unholiness and his iniquities have made a separation with God. There is a wide, deep, impassable gorge between God and man because of sin. Ultimately, the picture is accurately portrayed in the account of the rich man and Lazarus, when the rich man is in hell and torment, lifts up his eyes and sees Abraham far off. He asks for a moment of relief and Abraham declares, *between us and you a great chasm has been fixed*. Now, that's a glimpse of where everyone is headed without the Lord's gracious deliverance. Without God, the people sit in darkness and have neither idea of what peace is nor how to turn on the light, let alone rising and shining. Only those who have heard the Word of God's Light and believe in the Glory of the Lord will be deliver.

Near the end of chapter 59, Isaiah states that very thing - that the Lord Himself will come to Zion as the Redeemer. While God is coming with His judgment against the depraved people within the Israelites and among the same in the Gentile world, His faithfulness to His Promise will be a blessing for all Gentiles and all in Israel who have been brought to and remained faithful to the Lord God Almighty.

Chapter 60 gives a broader description of the gathering of God's chosen people as the Glory of the Lord descends upon and in the midst of the Church. As a result of the Redeemer having come into the world - being born into the world as the Son of a virgin - the command given to the Church is to *Arise, shine; for your Light has come*.

Jesus is *the true Light that enlightens every man*, the One who was coming into the world. Isaiah declares, *Arise, shine; for your Light has come*. Christians, *arise and shine*, for the Light of the world has come into the world. The truth here is to wake up from the sleepiness of Bethlehem's darkness and the sinful world surrounding the stable where the *Light has come* and *the darkness has not been able to overcome it*.

Events are taking place; events of a great magnitude. Isaiah continues: *the Glory of the Lord is risen upon you*, meaning the Church in general and you in particular. *The Glory of the Lord* is really nothing less than the Christ and He has arisen on you. As a result, we are given the power and privilege of rising and shining.

The 2nd verse in our texts tells the particular reason for us to be awake - *for behold, darkness covers the earth, and dark clouds the nations*. The darkness that covers the earth and the clouds which are over the nations combine to represent the reality when people do not have the Light of the world, Jesus the Christ, in their hearts. Those people who rely upon other gods are pictured as sitting in the darkness of this world. The description is of the nations which and the people who lack the Gospel as people who sit in the darkness and gloom of sin, and therefore, in the valley of the shadow of eternal death.

In contrast to such darkness, Isaiah continues, *but over you the Lord has arisen, and His Glory shines over you*. The Light shining upon the Church is now reflected and shines into the darkness of the world. Those who do not sit in the Light of God only know of the condemnation of the Law. The natural knowledge of the Law, which the world sees, does not know anything of God's grace through the redemption worked by Jesus Christ. However, not all those who are in darkness of the earth and under the dark clouds are doomed to remain in eternal darkness. The prophet writes that *nations shall come to your Light, and kings to the brightness of your rising*. The Church has received the long-awaited promise. Reflecting the Light which is the Glory of the Lord, the Church shines like a lighthouse in the darkness of the world. The result is the streaming of God's elect among the nations, among the Gentiles, to the Church's reflection of the Light of the world.

Just as the Wise Men came from the east following the star promised in the Word of God, each man, woman, youth, child, and infant brought to faith by the gracious Word of God - each person flows to the reflected Light of the Church. Each Christian then becomes a reflection of God's Light. We are directed to look out into the world and behold all the crowds being brought into the Church because of the proclamation of the Gospel to the nations. *Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms*

The truth continues as the Church looks out into the world to see those who are being gathered. The Gospel of Jesus the Christ, being proclaimed in the world, will bring many people into the Lord's Church. Consider what John wrote in the 11th chapter of his Gospel:

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

As the Church fulfills her mission of making disciples of all nations, there is a great joy within her ranks. Isaiah describes it as follows: *Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you*. There is great joy in heaven and in the congregation at the conversion of one person, at the baptism of each baby. For most of us, that conversion occurred at the time of baptism. Others,

like the Wise Men and the thief on the cross heard the Promise of the written Word and the Incarnate Word as it and He were revealed to them, and they became one of God's people.

The final verse in our text reads, *A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Mid'ian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.* We are immediately reminded of the Wise Men here - those who had read of the promise in the Word, who believed in the Lord, and responded in faith. Their fruit of faith was so great that they traveled for many, many months, putting up with the hardships of the journey to come and worship the Christ-Child of Bethlehem. They also responded with fruits of faith when they bowed before the Lord God Almighty and presented to the Baby their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

We may certainly use the Wise Men as an example of the response that people have when the Lord calls them into His Church by His Word of such glad tidings and great joy. We worship the Lord God and Him alone, receiving from Him the gifts of His forgiveness, His eternal life, and His salvation. Out of gratitude, all that we are and have belongs to Him, and we willingly return a portion to Him for use in His Church.

Once people come into the Body of Christ, they reflect the Light that is shining on them. Each one of you has the Light of your Savior in you. You are to be shining brightly in this world where there is darkness and gloom. Don't hide your Light under a bushel where no one is able to see it. Let your Light so shine among people.

That, dear people is the message concerning the Lord which is yours today. It is a message with which you may not only live, but it is also the message with which you may die. Jesus announces to you this day, *I AM the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life.* Jesus proclaims to you at the beginning of this year, not knowing whether any one of us will be here to see next December 31st, *For this is the will of My Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal Life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Jesus said, *No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.* On that great and wonder-filled Day, the Lord will call us forth from our graves with His the Word of His mouth; Words which might well be ...

... Arise and Shine!