

Arise and Shine

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“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. ³ Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses’ arms. ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.” (Isaiah 60:1-6).

1. Electrical Power

Does anyone of you know when people began to use electrical power? History tells us that Benjamin Franklin proved lightning was electricity in 1752. Later, Thomas Edison would invent the first light bulb in 1879. 150 years ago, most people in the world lived without electrical power. Can you imagine living without electricity today?

Today, electricity is an essential part of our lives. Electricity is what gives us and keeps us in light. The theme of today’s scripture talks about the meaning of light as followers of Christ.

2. The Return of the Jews

Isaiah 60:1 says, ***“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.”*** ***For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.”***

Why does the Prophet Isaiah talk about light? In 586 BC, the kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel, was invaded by Babylonians and the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed. Many Jews were exiled and were held in Babylonia for about seventy years. The Jews in Babylonia felt as if they were living in darkness. Psalm 137:1 tells us, ***“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.”*** The Israelites in Babylonia missed Jerusalem and wept to return to their country.

Although the Jews suffered greatly in a foreign land, they maintained their national and religious identity. Elders supervised the Jewish communities, and several prophets helped the people to have the hope that they would one day return to Jerusalem.

The captivity ended in 538 B.C., when the Persian conqueror of Babylonia, Cyrus the Great, gave the Jews permission to return to Palestine. The Jews could not believe that they were allowed to return. They believed that God made it possible. Psalm 126:1 says, “**When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed.**” The returned exiles were filled with laughter and joy when they returned home.

However, upon their return, the returned exiles found a difficult situation in Jerusalem. According to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people experienced opposition from the local people and the project to repair the walls came to a halt (Ezra 4; Nehemiah 4-5). The people of Israel returned to their homeland but still felt like they were in darkness. In chapter 60, the Prophet Isaiah encourages and reminds them that their light has come.

3. Arise and Shine

What does Isaiah mean when he says, “**Arise, shine**”? Literally the term “arise” means to get up from where they are. The people felt covered in darkness. Isaiah tells the Israelites that they need to shine their light to the world.

Although Isaiah does not say anything about Jesus, John’s gospel tells us that Jesus is the light who came to deliver us from the darkness in the world. John 1:5 says, “**the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**” When the light is on, darkness is dispelled.

What does the phrase “**the glory of the Lord has risen upon you**” mean in Isaiah? The glory of the Lord in the Bible means the manifestation of the Almighty God. Many times in the Bible, God manifests Himself through the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and there was a voice from heaven, “**This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased**” (Matthew 3:17).

When the Holy Spirit descends upon him, Jesus begins to shine God’s light. Luke 4 tells us what happened to Jesus when he visited the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah is given to him. Jesus unrolls the scroll and begins to read Isaiah 61:1 & 2.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go

free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus begins to shine His light as the Messiah to Israel and to the world.

4. Darkness in the World

Our current world can make it often seem like darkness in all around us. Just like the Israelites, many of those around us may feel down or in a time of despair. Hope can seem distant or even impossible.

Yet, we are reminded that God tells us to "arise, shine" just as Isaiah said to the Israelites. God reminds us that Jesus Christ, our light, has come, and the Holy Spirit, the glory of the Lord, is with us.

5. The Mission of Israel and Our Mission

Shining the light of the Lord was the mission of the Jews. Isaiah 49:6 says, "***I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.***"

Have we received and given this light that goes to the nations? The answer probably varies by person. But regardless of how we answer individually, each of us knows that we have received the light of the world, who is Jesus. Verse 3 says, "***Nations shall come to your light.***" The Bible tells us that the people in our world who are in darkness will come to us to see our light. That light is Jesus, and we are meant to shine that light and God's love and care through our lives.

Matthew Chapter 2 reminds us of Isaiah 60 in the context of the Story of the Magi. The Magi begin their journey when they see the light.

We may wonder when or how, but the Bible tells us that we are called to shine the light of Jesus to others. Since December 2021 we are live streaming our Sunday service on YouTube and Facebook. I am glad that our online broadcasts have allowed us to reach people with the light of Jesus all around the world. Even my family in Korea mentioned they were blessed by our Christmas Cantata, Christmas Candlelight service, and our Sunday worship.

We never know when someone will be touched by our worship and the light of Christ that we shine to others. That is the mission of our church. What about each one's mission?

6. Conclusion

Many around the world have lost loved ones due to COVID-19. Why are we still here on this earth? I believe it is because each of us has a mission from God for our lives. Our mission is the same mission that was given to the people of Israel. We are called to dispel darkness in the world

and to shine the light of Christ onto others. Ann Burnham as well as other leaders in our church encourage us to get involved and reach out to others with our time, talent, and financial resources. Shining the light of Jesus is not a burden but a privilege. The ministry of our lives come in all shapes and sizes, yet even these small acts of service shine the light of Jesus in this world, especially to those who are looking for light in this time of darkness.

7. Application

Last week, I got an email from someone who recently moved into a nursing home. I've got her permission to share her story with you. She wrote, "I have formed a strong friendship with an aide... As a child, she was never taken to church and does not attend any church now. Every day that she works here she stops by my room, and we have a nice chat. I don't preach I just show that I am very interested in her. When she leaves, she says "goodbye my love," and I tell her that I love her. In time, I know God is going to touch her heart and bring her into the Kingdom." God uses a nursing home resident to shine the light of Jesus to her aide.

No one can predict what might happen in the future. Yet each morning, we know that God wakes us up with the words, "***Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.***" May we shine the light of Christ in many different ways, that God may receive the glory. Amen.