

*Isaiah 60:1-6. "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. <sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. <sup>3</sup> Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. <sup>4</sup> "Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. <sup>5</sup> Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. <sup>6</sup> Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.*

*Arise, shine, for your light has come!*

A buddy tries to cheer you up and so he sends you a video with the caption: look at this amazing thing! You've had a tough day and so your wife shares you this picture that she took of the kids (or the dog) and a smile stretches across your face. Your granddaughter comes when you were sick, and she has drawn a picture and brought a card that she created for you and it lights up your day and you can't stop talking about it for weeks.

Look at this incredible thing that brings you joy. Look at this incredible sight, this incredible thing God has done for you. This is the wonderful truth that God reveals to brighten your days: Your light has come. Christ our King has come for us. He has come for you. Arise, shine, your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

This is a message of hope that Isaiah delivers to God's people that were facing dark discouragement and exile. Isaiah offers this incredible encouragement to people who were facing dark days. God's people would be restored, and the glory of the LORD would come to them. God's people would be scattered in the darkness of exile, in sadness and shame, but God promised that they would be restored. And God's people would not only be restored to a shadow of her former glory, but their restored land would be the place where God revealed his ultimate glory in sending his Son.

This is the picture, the coming reality that Isaiah's words foretold. In this vision, the glory of the Lord had returned to the land of promise. His people would return from exile, the city of Jerusalem and her walls and her temple would be rebuilt, but truly the glory of the LORD would come when the promised child was born. The Messiah, Christ Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. God's own Son, God

himself would come and make himself known to his people and as the Savior of the whole world. This place once trampled by the Assyrians and then Babylonians would be restored and instead, it would become this place where happy pilgrims from far off nations would travel to because the promised Savior had come for them.

In this vision of promise, we can envision those magi, those wise men who came from the east. They came with their gifts. They came with their camels and with their frankincense and their proclamation of praise that we celebrate still today. Bearing gifts fit for the king of kings and the Lord of lords, they were undeterred by a people that didn't seem to care. The glory of the LORD had come, and even though no one in Jerusalem seemed to know about it, they knew it. They believed it. The star, the light in the sky, the Word of God proclaimed this wonderful truth and so they had traveled to this land to worship Christ the King. And as they came to the house, we are told that they were overjoyed. The light of the star shined bright as they laid their gifts in his presence and they were in awe of God's grace and his power and his love.

The glory of the LORD had come to this land of promise. God in flesh would tread upon the soil. He would walk their streets and darken the doorsteps of their homes and eat at the tables of sinners. God would grace their land with his very presence. He would preach and teach in places like Capernaum and Nazareth, in Jerusalem, and in tiny villages like Bethany. He would bring joy and life and light through the saving message of the gospel, fulfilled and proclaimed for all to hear.

Did you know that the same has happened for you and me, in Danube and Renville, and Flora Twp? The glory of the Lord has come to us. We might be well aware of the struggles of our town, the problems that our county, and our country, our world currently faces. We are well acquainted with the issues that our little churches are struggling with, and the problems that the worker, the farmer, the family face in our communities. And while all these issues are certainly not to be ignored or completely overlooked God invites you, calls you, to take time to look up and consider this great and joyful thing that your God has done. See how your God comes to you and has brought the glory of the LORD to those once lost in darkness. Christ has come. Salvation has dawned. The good news of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. Light and life and immortality are made known to you through Jesus Christ. The glory of the LORD has come to those living in the shadow of darkness. Joy has come to stretch a smile across our eternity.

Arise and shine, O people of God, for your light has dawned. Let us get up and shine with his light, as reflections of his light. We are the people of God and his Christ dwells with us. We are Christ's church, and he has given us victory and peace, so let's own that, let's wear that like you would wear the logo of your favorite team after a big victory. Wear the good news of Christmas and Christ proudly. We are not the church that is to cower in the corner afraid of what might happen or be

ashamed how things look a bit bleaker than they have in the past, or to feel bad for ourselves that this church isn't as full as it used to be. We are the people of God. Lift up your heads. Look up. Look around and about you. See what your God has done for you. Arise, shine. Stand up. Shine with the light of Christ. Illumine this house with your praise. Illumine your house with his love. Shine with the goodness and hope of Christ. Shine with his glory and his kindness of Christ in your place of employment in your communities, wherever you walk and wherever you work, and wherever you go, because Christ Jesus has come, and he has come for you. See this important and wonderful thing he has done for you. He has come to give you light, and confidence and the sure hope of eternity. He has come to give you the peace of forgiveness and restoration with God and by faith, you know that you belong to him and he dwells in you. This is good stuff. These are amazing things.

This is a light that no darkness cannot overcome - not the drop in membership over the years, not the dip in attendance from Christmas to the Epiphany, not the troubles of this life, not the exhaustion from another trip to the hospital and another rough week at work, not the threat of war, not the blah of the post-Christmas season, not how 2020 entered with a cold miserable thud instead of that incredible start that you were hoping for. None of this can change the good news of Christmas, the good news of Christ, that continues into the season of Epiphany and throughout the whole year. It is the good news of great joy that is there for us as a steady stream of hope and light and joy for our whole life through. This glorious truth remains the same day in and out: Jesus came. He was born for us. He is the glory of the Lord and he has come to shine with the brilliance of his glory and power upon us and for us. He comes for us. He comes to us. He comes to save sinners. He comes to bring us light and life and joy and hope.

We so easily can get lost in the drudgery of the day and the darkness of the moment. As Christ's church, we might get sucked down into the quicksand of the statistics that speak of the demise of the church that we know of today in America. So often we are tempted to walk around like parents staring down at their phones and getting bogged down by the news or envious of those who seemingly have it better - even when their children are happily playing around them. Look up and see the blessing that surrounds you in the good news of Christ. With eyes wide with awe look up and see what God has done for you and for others! Listen to God's incredible encouragement for those surrounded by discouragement. Your light has come! Look up and see this thing that has happened with the Lord hath told us about: Christ has come!

When we look up and we see what God has done, this good news has the power to melt our furrowed brow into a thankful expression of joy. Look up and see the joy and the light that is around you. Live in this beautiful moment of grace that God has given to us. See the glory of God as he gathers his children to himself. Look up and so how he gently holds his children in his arms and tends to each soul with his

message of forgiveness. Look up and see how the LORD forgives those gathered here, and renews the hope of the struggling, and brings peace to the troubled soul, rest to the weary, and happiness and eternal joy to those tread on by the troubles of the day. Look how he upholds and carries his people on his arm, how he gently carries his aged believers to their home in heaven and dandles the little ones on his knee.

Look up and see the joy that we have in knowing Jesus. With childlike wonder look at the Christ child and how he came for you, and marvel at how the nations come to worship him and you are a part of this global, this universal church... that's right universal. You are part of something that God does all over our nation. In big city cathedrals, in little country churches, he comes near. He does this throughout the world as he gathers his people to himself. Congregations that meet in school buildings and conference centers, in huts and tents, and in lovely structures made from brick and stone, church buildings that are simply and those that are grand, buildings that are full and scarcely filled, into those places he comes near and by his grace we are all made a part of this Church that shines with his glory. Our God comes near and he comes with his glory to bring light and life and eternal joy to his people that he rescues from daily and eternal darkness.

Look up and may your hearts swell with this brilliant light and joy that God has given to you his church. Jesus comes to forgive his people from their sins. Remember how wise men made a trip to come and worship the Christ-child and how they presented him with gifts of thanks and praise and how their hearts swelled with joy. Remember and celebrate and rejoice that this same joy has come for us and to us as well. Wise men and women still worship Christ the King. Rejoice and be filled with joy for the Lord has come, let heaven and nature sing! His light has come for us. His light has dawned and shines upon us, to give us hope and enduring joy.

Arise, shine, dear Christian people, your light has come. The glory of the LORD has come to you.