

**Arise and shine for the light of Salvation has come into the world for you and for me.  
Amen.**

“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. **This is God’s Word.**

**Dear Friends,**

What is one word you might use to describe the weather this past December? I would say, “dark” or “overcast.” It seems that many of the days, especially in the last half of the month, were dark days and not only was the day gloomy but they were **short** as well. Sometimes we might wonder, **“Why Does the Winter Have to Be So Dark?”** As we consider this portion of scripture it reminds us that it doesn’t, **“Not in the View of the Lord’s Glory,”** and **“Not in view of the Joy in Our Hearts.”**

**I.** I love the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of our sermon text, **“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.”** Isaiah is telling us to stand up and to be happy as he prophesies that the promised Messiah is coming. That’s what he meant when he said, **“The glory of the Lord rises upon you.”** As the angels appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus, Luke tells us, **“The glory of the Lord shone around them.”** (Luke 2:9). Isaiah also calls the promised Messiah a light and we hear similar words from Simeon as he held baby Jesus and declared that he would be, **“the light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel.”** (Luke 2:32).

Just 12 days ago we did rise and sing praise to God as we celebrated Christmas and what a joyous holiday it was. But now the trees have come down and the decorations have been put away and some of the presents have already been forgotten. Do we still have to be so joyful?

I have to tell you that this past week has been a joyous one for me. The one thing that has made a difference is the sun – (spelled sun). When the sun shines, people are happier and the days seem to be just a little bit longer and people get in line at the car wash to get their cars clean and shiny and everyone just seems to be in a better mood.

Well, this is certainly an apt description of how this baby in Bethlehem, whose birth we celebrated 12 days ago, continues to shine in our hearts. The Son (spelled son) is indeed shining on us and bringing us the joy of forgiveness for our sins and he shines on us through his Word as he lights the path we want to live as a Child of God. And we need that because Isaiah reminds us that darkness covers the earth.

Have you ever been in complete darkness where you can't even see your hand in front of your face? We visited Carlsbad Caverns many years ago and we were over 700 feet underground. I can remember the tour guide turning out the lights and it was completely dark – you couldn't see anything and no one moved. We were worried about taking a step into danger. As Isaiah's description of the world as darkness is a fitting description and if we live in the darkness of the world it is easy to step into trouble and danger.

The Children of Israel were headed towards this spiritual darkness at the time of Isaiah. The evidence was there: The strong and wealthy were using their power to harass the poor; Men went around drunk; Women cared more about their clothes than about their neighbor's hunger; People paid lip service to God; They kept up an outward appearance of being religious but their heart lacked a love for God; The people kept the ideas of being a "good person" and "doing the right thing" but had rejected the promise of a Savior along with forgiveness, grace and life; They trusted in the Temple itself for spiritual safety rather than trusting in God (you might say they trusted in their church membership and heritage to save them).

Do any of these things sound familiar? We consider ourselves "enlightened" and so much better than these ancient peoples and yet our attitudes can so easily follow the same path as theirs and on some days we fall into the same dark traps but the glory of the Lord rises above all of it. He suffered under the darkness of our sins as he suffered on the cross and paid the penalty God demands and then he shines into our hearts with forgiveness and brings us out of the darkness of guilt into his wonderful light of salvation and life. He removes the fear and uncertainty. That is why we have every reason to arise and shine and rejoice. For the glory of the Lord engulfs us and shines in our hearts. **And we can't help but respond with thankfulness.**

**II. "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."** On this Day of Epiphany, we can't help but connect this to our gospel lesson that talks about the magi coming from the east bearing their kingly gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh for baby Jesus. They saw the light (the special star in the sky) and had to come to see and worship the light of salvation. We know that over the last 2 millennia, the Gospel has gone out throughout the world and many have come to see the light of salvation found only in Jesus.

And now Isaiah tells us, **"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."** As we view the world and how it attacks Christianity we might feel all alone and that feeling is sometimes heightened when our friends are more concerned about tolerance and political correctness than about what God tells us in his Word. But Isaiah reminds us to remember that you are part of a great assembly of believers that have existed throughout the ages and continue to exist even today.

Our congregation – our church family – only numbers about 140 but we are part of a larger denomination that numbers 350,000 and the number of Christians world-wide are many millions in number. What joy that can bring us to know we are not alone and that we have brothers and sisters in Christ all around to encourage us.

Isaiah ends this portion of scripture with an amazing picture, **“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.”** Have you ever thought about what makes God happy? When his people gather around his word and bring offerings and proclaim the praise of the Lord. These verses were fulfilled in a number of ways and sometimes on a grand scale.

And we are the fulfillment of these verses as we come to church to hear our Savior speak to us. That brings joy to our hearts and joy to the heart of our God. As we bring our offerings as a way of thanking God for his grace and mercy it brings joy to our hearts and joy to the heart of our God. As we let the light of our Savior shine in our hearts to guide us in Christian living it brings joy to our hearts to be obedient to God’s Word and will for our lives and it brings joy to the heart of our God.

We live in a dark world – a world that encourages sin and sometimes we fall into that darkness but the Son shines in our hearts and our world – our life is not dark but rather filled with the light and joy of salvation. May that lift us up and prepare us for another week in the world and may it help us to reflect the light of our Savior in all that we do. Amen.