

**Text: Isaiah 60:1 – 6**

**Theme: The Light Still Brightly Shines!**

1. He Removes the Darkness
2. He Fills Us with Joy

In the calendar of the Christian Church, January 6<sup>th</sup> is known as Epiphany. One of the meanings of the word “epiphany” is “shining forth”. The readings from God’s Word used throughout this time of year remind us the Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. In the Gospel of John, chapter one, God the Holy Spirit led the pen of John to write this about Jesus: “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” Listen now as the prophet Isaiah was also led to talk about Jesus as “The Light”. The Word of God for our consideration this Epiphany Sunday is taken from Isaiah 60:1 – 6.

**ISA 60:1**        **"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.**  
**ISA 60:2**        **See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.**  
**ISA 60:3**        **Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.**  
**ISA 60:4**        **"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.**  
**ISA 60:5**        **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.**  
**ISA 60:6**        **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.**

The first point we want to take away from this section of Scripture is that Jesus Christ, the Light of the world who still shines brightly, is the one who removes the darkness people are living in. What is this darkness? It is much more than the darkness which comes upon us when all the lights go out in a room. Darkness is often times used in the Bible to describe those who are living sin and unbelief; for those who are headed for eternal damnation. How many people are living in this darkness? God’s Word offers us this answer, “See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples . . .” The darkness of sin is a thick cloud hanging over the entire world. All people born into this world have the darkness of sin clouding their hearts. This sin shows itself in the lives of all people day after day. Just as we can’t make the clouds disappear on a cloudy, gloomy day, so also all efforts on our part to remove this darkness of sin only fail.

If we are unable to remove this darkness, how is it removed? Again, from the Word of God before us, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.” It is the Lord himself who is the only one who can remove the darkness we sinners are in. Isaiah says that the darkness of sin and unbelief is removed only by “the glory of the Lord” shining upon our hearts. What does the Bible mean when it speaks about “the glory of the Lord”? Remember that it was the “glory of the Lord” which brought fear to the shepherds that first Christmas night. The glory of the Lord brings fear and terror to sinners as they stand in the presence of the great, true and holy God. But, in “the glory of the Lord” there is also the promise of grace, blessing, help and deliverance. It was the “glory of the of the Lord” in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night which led the people of Israel through their deliverance from Egypt to the Promised Land. Upon whom does the glory of the Lord shine? For whom is the Light intended? Many Israelites thought it was something reserved just for them, and no one else. Yet God’s Word says, “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” The Light shines brightly not just upon the Jews but the non-Jews, the Gentiles as well. It shines upon many people, from many different nations of the earth.

January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Day of Epiphany, has been referred to by some as the “Gentile Christmas”. It is on this day that we recall the wonderful Good News that the Light shines brightly on us and many other people. The Savior, Jesus Christ, came to this earth not only for one particular nation or race of people. Rather, The Light, Jesus, offers the Light of forgiveness to all people. That is what the Good News of the Gospel message tells us. Gospel passages such as Romans, chapter 1, “I am not ashamed of the

gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” Then there is the familiar, wonderful, Gospel words of John 3:16 which make it so clear, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” It is the forgiveness of all sins, which Jesus won for all sinners, which we by God’s grace enjoy personally through the God-given gift of faith. By God’s grace, and the full and free forgiveness of all sins won for us by the Light, Jesus Christ, you and I are considered God’s special people. As Peter writes in his first letter, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God . . .”

The passage which I just quoted from Peter’s first letter continues. After declaring the wonderful Good News that we are people who belong to God, Peter was led to continue, “that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” The Light, Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness of sins he graciously offers to us, fills us with joy; joy, which we can’t help but express.

God’s Word before us continues this morning, “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.” God’s Word calls on us to take note of the fact that many, many people are coming to faith. That is because the one, single tool used by the Holy Spirit to bring people from around the globe to faith is not some human creation. It is the powerful Word of God which creates faith. Isaiah was led to write earlier about that powerful Word in chapter 55. Quoting the Lord, the prophet writes, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” Not only are we to be supportive of our fellow believers, but we are to rejoice in the fact that they, too, are part of the family of believers. “Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy ...”

How does this portion of God’s Word encourage you and me to express the joy we have knowing the we along with many, many others are part of God’s family? One way is by giving back to our Lord the best of all the gifts he showers upon us day after day. Isaiah saw people expressing their joy to the Lord in this way, “the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense . . .” Those on whom the Light brightly shines express their joy by returning to the Light, Jesus, the best of their time, talents and their treasures. As I read this last verse from God’s Word before us, no doubt your mind painted the picture of the Wise Men. Guided by a star sent by God, they came to the place where the Savior was. When they saw Jesus, they offered him their best gifts. They were not simply gifts of gold, incense and myrrh, but offerings of their time, talent and thanksgiving. Not only can we express our joy by giving of our earthly blessings, but we can also express our joy in our worship, by “proclaiming the praise of the Lord”, as Isaiah writes. Each time we gather here in God’s house we gather to hear him speak to us in his Word and meet us in his Sacraments, then we respond to his great love for us in our joyful praise.

What Good News there is for us during the Epiphany season of the Christian Church Year! The Gospel message points us to our Savior, Jesus Christ, whom the Bible calls The Light of the world. It is The Light, Jesus, and the message of full and free forgiveness through the blood of the Savior which removes the darkness of sin and unbelief and fills our hearts with joy. Dear Christian friends, rejoice for the Light still brightly shines! Amen.