

“Arise, Shine; for Your Light Has Come!”
(Isaiah 60:1-6 – Epiphany – January 5, 2025)

Isaiah 60:1-6 – ¹*Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.* ²*For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.* ³*The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.* ⁴*Lift up your eyes all around, and see: They all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.* ⁵*Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.* ⁶*The multitude of camels shall cover your land, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.*

Dear Redeemed in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the world:

This time of year, many people feel the effects of darkness. These are the shortest days, when the sun is near its lowest in the sky. With less sunlight, many people experience the gloom of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Then too, perhaps it is a “letdown season,” now that the joy and anticipation of Christmas and the holidays is past. Vacation is over for many, and it is time to get back to the daily routine of work and school, just when it is hardest to get out of bed on cold dark mornings.

But our text gives a wake-up call, even when things would appear at their darkest: **“Arise, Shine; for Your Light Has Come!”** The glad tidings of Christmas joy continue in this season of Epiphany, which celebrates the light of God’s salvation in Christ, our newborn Savior, shining forth to the ends of the earth. Our text tells us of this Light that **1) It has overcome the darkness, 2) It draws many to its brightness, and 3) It moves hearts to joy and praise.**

1) It has overcome the darkness

In view of the Savior’s coming, the prophet Isaiah declares in verses 1-2: *“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.”*

The deep darkness spoken of is not merely the gloom of clouds overshadowing a sunless day, nor even the blackness of a moonless night. This deep darkness is sin. It has covered the earth since the fall of mankind. The sinful nature darkens the soul of every child of Adam. It covers all in a death shroud, which is the wages of sin.

But there is worse darkness than the shadows of physical death and the grave. Sin shrouds many in the darkness of spiritual death, even as they walk the earth and the days appear brightest for them. It is the darkness of the soul separated from the light and life of God. It is the hopelessness of the soul that seeks light and life in the false wisdom and the fleeting pleasures of the world, which are coming to nothing. Yet there is a worse darkness that awaits all who walk in spiritual darkness, impenitence, and unbelief. It is the eternal separation of body and soul from God in the outer darkness of hell, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12).

If God had left us in our sin-darkened state, we would have remained under the shroud of death, separated from the life of God. If God had left us in bondage to sin, we would have remained under the deceptive power of the prince of darkness, Satan. We would have shared his judgment in the never-ending death and darkness of hell.

But here amidst the deep darkness, God announces good news for fallen sinners: *“Arise, shine; for your light has come!”* Where there is light there is hope! The light spoken of is not just the rising of the sun after a dark night, nor the climbing of the sun higher in the sky with the coming of warmer days. This light is not an impersonal force of nature: *“But the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.”* He is the Savior of sinners whom God promised since the fall. John 1:4-5, 9, 14 says: *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men... That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world... and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

With the birth of God’s only-begotten Son in our flesh, there came the dawning of a new day – the day of God’s grace and favor on the fallen children of Adam. Our very Creator, who gives life and light to all, entered the darkness of our sinful existence. At Christmas, the glory of the Lord shone from heaven as the angel announced the *“good tidings of great joy which will be to all people”* (Luke 2:9-10). For Jesus came into the world to shine His light of salvation on sinners and restore eternal life to us.

But to overcome our deep darkness, He had to deal with our sin. The Son of God, in whom there is no darkness (1 John 1:5), felt the darkness of a world of sinners in Himself. Under the shadow of the cross, Jesus said: *“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death”* (Matthew 26:38). On the cross, He felt all our guilt and punishment in His body and soul. As deep darkness covered all the land in those agonizing hours, Jesus felt the God-forsakenness of the Sinner in our place (Matthew 27:45-46).

Now through the righteous act of this one Man, God’s free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life (Romans 5:18). With all our sins removed in Christ, the darkness of separation from God is taken away. God was in Christ reconciling the

world to Himself, no longer counting our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5:19). And with sin removed, death has lost its sting: *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming”* (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

The Son is risen! The darkness is dispelled! Over all the dark clouds of this world, the Son shines in all His glory as our Savior. Even death is but a temporal shadow; for He who has passed through that dark valley for us, will bring us into the eternal glories of heaven. Truly, as God foretold in Isaiah 9:2: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.”* Where there is light, there is hope. In Christ, who is the Light and Life for all men, we are given eternal life and hope.

2) It draws many to its brightness

Therefore *“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you”* as your Savior! And now, this light draws many to its brightness.

When God spoke these words to the people of Israel, He wanted to comfort them in the Savior who would be born among them. But not only is Jesus the glory of His people Israel; He is a light to lighten the Gentiles. Isaiah goes on to say in verses 3-4: *“The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.”*

This is the message of Epiphany: Jesus is revealed as the Light of the world, the Savior for all. Just as the darkness of sin covers all people on earth – Jew and Gentile – so the light of Christ’s Gospel shines like a beacon to all nations, bringing good tidings of salvation for all (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).

At Epiphany, God provided a special star to shine over His Son, leading the Wise Men from the East to come and worship Him (Matthew 2:1-12). From that time, the train of believers, led by the light of God’s Word, continue to be drawn to Christ, the Light of the world. By the Holy Spirit and faith, the sons of God are brought from afar, and daughters are nursed at His side. Through His Word and Sacraments, all are gathered and nourished in faith. All are drawn to Christ, the true Light.

And as the glory of the Lord shines upon us in Christ, His Light shines through us to others. Jesus said to every believer: *“You are the light of the world”* (Matthew 5:14). Philippians 2:15-16 reminds us: *“you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.”* As we live in the light of His Word, witnessing the hope that is in us in Christ, others will be drawn to the light of His salvation, eternal life, and hope.

3) It moves hearts to joy and praise

All this moves our hearts to joy and praise, as our text now tells us in verses 5-6: *“Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you. The multitude of camels shall cover your land, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.”*

We can rejoice in the Light of the Gospel, knowing God’s forgiveness and eternal life in Christ. At the same time, our hearts swell with joy to see the Gospel at work in the hearts of others. As the apostle Paul preached the Gospel, he rejoiced to see its power at work, bringing sinners to Christ; as he exclaimed in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: *“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”*

And from hearts that rejoice in Christ also comes praise. When the wise men had followed the guiding star God provided, in light of His revealed Word and promise, they rejoiced to see Christ – who had been born, not only as the King of the Jews, but as the Savior of the world. They *“fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh”* (Matthew 2:11). Like those wise men, rejoicing to see our Savior, we can proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). In the joy of His salvation, we can serve the Lord with all the gifts He gives. We can offer our gold in His service, to help spread His Gospel of salvation at home and abroad. We can lift up our prayers as incense, in the words of the hymn:

O Christ, our true and only Light,
Enlighten those who sit in night;
Let those afar now hear Thy voice
And in Thy fold with us rejoice.

“Arise, shine; for your light has come!” The good tidings of Christmas joy continue in this season of Epiphany, and every day. No matter how dark and gloomy life may be in this fallen world, our true Light always shines brightly with hope. Christ has overcome the darkness of sin and death for us. The risen Son shines the light of His salvation and eternal life for all to see. As we live each day in the light of His glory, He moves our hearts to joy and praise.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.