

Isaiah 60:1-6

Epiphany; January 8 & 9, 2023

It started off as a quiet Sunday morning two weeks ago. It was Christmas Day. So, the service began a little later than a normal Sunday morning. After the service, we went to the airport to get on a plane to see our son and his family (especially a new granddaughter.) It was quiet at the airport. We left pretty much on time. As we were on the flight to Denver, we were able to watch the Packers play on the plane between here and Denver. Little did we know what we were about to face in Denver. What was suppose to be a short layover, it turned into a nearly 24 hour turnover in Denver. Flight after flight were being cancelled. We found ourselves to be right in the middle of the whole Southwest Airlines meltdown. We found ourselves standing hours after hours after hours in line. We finally were able to get out of Denver the next the next day to Southern California. When we got to southern California, our connecting flight to northern California was cancelled. We rented a car and drove the eight hours to our son's house. Finally, after being awake for nearly 42 hours straight, the head hit the pillow and it fell almost instantly asleep. After all the hours of waiting, the "long" day was over.

I wonder if that's how the children of Israel felt when they heard these words of Isaiah. **"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."** These were dark days that the children of Israel were living in. For century after century God had given his people light. But they chose to live in the darkness of sin. They had forsaken their God, and at least for a time, it seemed as if God had forsaken them. Things always seem worst in the darkness.

Darkness has a way of doing that, doesn't it? Think about how many hours we have laid awake in bed in the darkness worrying. It always seems worse in the darkness. When growing up, how many of you were afraid to go down into the darkness of the basement? Dark basements can be scary at times. Sitting on the floor of an airport at 2:30 in the morning, things seemed much worse than eventually boarding a plane in the afternoon while the sun was shining.

Many years went by before these words of Isaiah would come true. **"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."** These words should not have been a surprise to the people of Isaiah's day. God had long promised that the Messiah would come from the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 22:18); that he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); be a descendent of King David (2 Samuel 7, Isaiah 9:7). Did you catch upon whom that light was going to be shining on? You. This is YOUR light. This promise was not just meant for the people of Isaiah's day, it is meant for our day as well. It shines into the darkness of your hearts as well.

As the Lord would bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, they would bring fear to the hearts of neighboring nations. There was a king the nation of Moab, whose name was Balak. Balak called a wicked prophet, whose name was Balaam, to curse the children of Israel. Every time that he would try to curse God's people, his words were changed by God. At one of those times, Balaam speaks these words: **"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel."** Generation after generation those words of promise were passed down. Over and over again, God would tell his people that there was a King coming who would make everything good once again. God would use his prophets to give these promises again and again. But as days became years and years became decades and decades would become centuries, these words were forgotten by the children of Israel.

But one of those prophets who remembered these words, his name was Daniel. You probably remember the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. Daniel was a very gifted young man. It was during the time of Daniel that the nation of Israel would be conquered by the Babylonians. The Babylonians would take the greatest and best and train them to be used for themselves. One of those people who became very well respected was Daniel. During his time in Babylon, Daniel became a leader in the group of scholars named the magi. These were scholars who kept records of everything. No doubt, it would be Daniel who would tell the story of the King who was to come. How would they know when that King had arrived in the world? It would be marked by a star. They kept waiting long after Daniel and walked on this earth.

When that star would appear in the sky, they knew that this was something special. Their hearts beat faster. They needed to go and see this King. They packed up their bags and began their journey to see this King. When they began their journey these words of Isaiah became fulfilled. **"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 hip. 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. 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."

It took us a little while to figure out what was going on Denver two weeks ago. The flight crews were not in the same places as the planes were. If the crews were there, they were beginning to *time-out* on the number of hours they could work. By Monday morning, everyone was starting to figure out what was happening. So, when there was a full crew and an empty plane at the gate, that plane could leave. When those full crews would show up at a gate, the people at that gate would clap their hands and let a cheer go out. Since we all were in the same boat, you could be happy for those who continued their journey. You also knew that at some point it would be our time to go as well.

God wants his people to know that this Messiah has come for all the people. **"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."** You are no longer trapped in your sins. Your light has come to take away the darkness that sin brings to you and to this world. Therefore, on this day of Epiphany **"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 hip. 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."** Amen.