

**January 6, 2008**  
**The Epiphany of Our Lord**

*“Arise, Shine, Your Light Has Come!”*

**ISAIAH 60:1-6**

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*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.*

Did you know that you can start a fire with a can of Coca Cola and a piece of chocolate? How? Take the can and rub the bottom with the chocolate for several minutes until it is very smooth and shiny. Then hold the can in the sunlight and direct the sun’s rays toward some dry tinder that will ignite quickly. How amazing is that! You can take the light of the sun that comes from 93 million miles away and direct it in such a way that it starts a fire.

When God created the world it was formless and empty. Darkness covered the earth. Then God created light, and he saw that it was good. On the fourth day of creation he made the sun, moon and stars. With light comes the blessing of life, heat and power. We are exploring new ways in which we can convert light into usable energy to power our homes thus decreasing our dependence on oil.

This morning we want to direct our attention to a much greater light and life that has come into our lives. The prophet Isaiah directs us to look at the light of the glory of God that has come into our lives. We have seen that light shining in the manger of Bethlehem this Christmas season. The wise men were led by a light to the very place where Jesus was. They knelt down and worshipped Jesus, the tiny baby, as the light of the world, their Lord and God and Savior. This morning we want to think of how this light has come into our lives to rescue us from the darkness, and how this light is shining brightly in all the world.

**Look at how this Light shines on you**

“Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.” Oh, didn’t you love that wake up call when you were a teenager and wanted to sleep in late. Your mom or dad knocked on your door and spoke those enduring words that elicited a deep groan or even angry growl, “Rise and shine.” When we showed up late for morning chores, and late was 6:00 AM my dad would say, “The best part of the day is already over.” What if you could wake up every morning and greet each new day with the joy of knowing you will see more of God’s glory shining in your life today than you saw yesterday? In Ephesians 3 Paul has this amazing prayer: “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep

is the love of Christ.”

Every day of life on this earth is another opportunity to see and experience God’s glory in our lives, the glory that we see in his creation and the glory we see in his love that found a way to rescue us from the darkness of sin and unbelief. Just as the world turns completely every 24 hours to expose us to light after darkness, the Lord constantly basks us in the light of his love.

Isaiah calls on us to remember the darkness that once dominated our lives. “See the darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.” The darkness that covers all people on this earth is a thick darkness. The word for “covering” is the same word used to describe the waters of the great world flood completely covering the earth. You can see the darkness everywhere as people open their lives to sin and create havoc and chaos in our world. Jesus said at the end of the world nations would rise up against nations and the love of many would grow cold. Read the news, watch television, listen to the radio and you immediately sense you are immersed in a world of darkness where people open themselves up to sin and make life miserable for everyone around them.

You see the darkness creeping into our schools where children are mean and nasty to other children. You see it enter into our homes where husbands and wives refuse to get along with each other and love each other as God wants them to do in their marriages. You see this darkness where you work when people hurt each other with words and gossip just to get ahead and take another person’s job. Genesis 9 describes this darkness in our world with these words, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Ephesians 4 says, “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”

Where it is most difficult to observe the darkness is in our own hearts and minds. If I ask you to recall this morning some of the darkest moments of your life, what do all the dark moments have in common? To be totally and brutally honest we have to admit that some of the darkest moments came when we opened ourselves up to sin and then suffered the consequences of that sin. With David we confess in Psalm 51, “Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”

Then there are the days when everything looks dark. God’s love for us does not change, but we find ourselves not seeing that love as clearly as we should. Satan loves to lead us into a dark closet, shut the door behind us, and then torment us day and night with the speculation that God’s love and mercy and kindness is not as real.

Instead of living in a world or personal closet of darkness the Lord invites us this morning to step out of our dark cave and look up at the light of his glory and his love that greets each new day. Isaiah tells us, “But the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.” The picture is here of the sun rising in the east bringing light, and warmth and light to a cruel, cold world that is not our real home. As we sang in the hymn verse this morning, “How lovely shines the Morning Star! The nations see and hail afar The light in Judah shining. O David’s Son of Jacob’s race, My Bridegroom and my King of grace, For

you my heart is pining. Lowly, Holy, Great and glorious, O victorious Prince of graces, Filling all the heav'nly places."

I think that I am safe in saying that very few Christians have ever experienced darkness in their lives as great as Job. It was Job who cried out from the pit of darkness, "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity on me, for the hand of God has struck me." But then in the deepest darkest dungeon of despair for the soul suddenly Job cries out not in pain, or bitterness of anguish, but in faith and hope, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth." The darkest moments can suddenly turn into the brightest when the love of God shines into your hearts and minds as it did for Job. The Lord turned on the light and helped him his Redeemer waiting for him after he died. The light of the star led the wise men to see Jesus.

During this time of the year there is more darkness than other times of the year. You can be thankful that you are not living in Barrow, Alaska where they have 65 days of total darkness in the winter months. They say goodbye to the sun and do not see it until January 24. When it does appear momentarily the people stand outside and cheer for they know better days are ahead. Dear Christian the better days, or should I say the best days of your life are ahead for you when you believe that the light of God's glory has come to you. Every day is another day to see the glory of God in Jesus Christ your Lord. This is Epiphany, which means "appearing." When you see Jesus lying in a cradle as the wise men did, or when you see him cry out from the cross, "It is finished" as John did, or when you see the nail marks in his hands as Thomas did, you are looking at the glory of your God that shines on you and delivers you from the darkness into which you were born. 2 Corinthians 4 says, "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

### **Look at how this Light shines in the world**

The Lord does not want this light restricted to only a handful of people. He wants the nations to come to the light, just as the wise men came from the East led by a star to worship Jesus. "Lift up your eyes and look around you: All assemble and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm." Lift your eyes and look around you. You see people coming to Jesus from all over the world. See the people meeting in homes in China to learn about Jesus, millions of people. See them gather in villages in India to learn about Jesus. See the parents teaching their little children about Jesus here in our country our neighborhoods. Even in places like Indonesia which is 95% Muslim the gospel of Jesus Christ is entering into villages and people are coming under great threat of persecution to worship Jesus as the Magi once did.

What effect does this large number of people all over the world streaming to the light have on us? "Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth of the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of nations will come. Herds and camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. All from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord." Isaiah originally wrote these words to people who were captives in the land of Babylon. The city of Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord had been destroyed. All the gold and silver had been removed. But now the people are coming from all the world to bring their treasures to Jesus whose

suffering, death and resurrection was pictured by the all the lambs and sacrifices and songs of praise in the temple of Jerusalem. What Isaiah saw was what we see this morning in our lives as we look at our income for 2008 and decide in our hearts to give a percentage to the Lord. I once knew a man who wrote out all his offering envelopes for the year trusting the Lord would give him the resources to fill the envelopes each week. Just as the wise men brought their gifts in joy to the Savior we have the joy of bringing our gifts to the Lord and we get encouraged when we see others bringing their best to the Lord.

In Barrows, Alaska the sun does not shine for 65 days of the year. Then for almost three months from May 10 to August 2 the sun never sets. It is called "the land of the midnight sun." Arise and shine for your light has come! You are living in a land where the light of God's love and his glory in Jesus his Son never sets or never changes in your life. That's the light we want shining more brightly every day of this New Year. Amen.