

Isaiah 60:1-6 Shine, For God's Glory has Shined On You

**"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.**

**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.**

**³ Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.**

**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 hip.**

**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.**

**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.**

One of my favorite movies is *The Shawshank Redemption*. I'm sure some of you have seen it; I'm guessing it might be a favorite of some of you, too. One of the main characters in the movie is Andy Dufresne, a former banker who was wrongly convicted of double murder and ends up being sentenced to spend the rest of his days in Shawshank prison. Now-spoiler alert!-plug your ears for a second if you don't want to hear about the end of the movie. Andy Dufresne eventually breaks out of Shawshank Prison in a very clever way and ends up living in freedom on the Pacific Ocean in Mexico. So there's a happy ending. But one of the more compelling scenes in the movie is when Andy Dufresne ends up in "the hole" for an entire month. See, the warden of Shawshank Prison was making crooked business deals and was forcing the former banker Andy Dufresne to launder the dirty money for him. And when the warden got nervous about Andy possibly exposing his iniquities, he sentenced Andy to spend a whole month in solitary confinement. So imagine this scene where Andy Dufresne is sitting in a small cell in which it's hardly big enough to lay down and it's dank and it's almost completely dark. And Andy spends day after day after day for a month in that dark, solitary confinement, feeling hopeless and lost and like life had lost purpose.

As I read this portion of Scripture this week, it made me think of Andy Dufresne when he lived for a month in "the hole" at Shawshank prison. Because the way that Andy Dufresne felt during that month in the hole could be likened to how some people feel their entire existence is going. Maybe it's the guilt of things they've done in their past. Maybe it's the feeling that there's never going to be an end or an escape from a world that is broken and mired in evil. Maybe it's the hopelessness they feel because they don't think that life has any real meaning or purpose. They feel trapped in a small prison cell of darkness and hopelessness. And quite honestly, maybe some of you are feeling those same sorts of feelings today.

To anybody feeling like they are trapped in deep darkness, the Lord has something he wants you to hear today. His message is this: **Arise and shine!** We don't have to sit and wallow in gloom. No one does. Because God has sent life-changing light upon us. And now that light is ours to reflect. Isaiah's prophecy before us to today communicates this liberating message from our gracious God to us.

So, a little bit of background regarding what's going on in this lesson. The prophet Isaiah lived around 700 B.C.-700 years before Christ walked on this earth. Isaiah was writing to the people of the southern kingdom of Judah, and they were people who were living in deep darkness. They had denied the Lord and rebelled against him and went their own sinful, idolatrous ways. So Isaiah foretold of a time in Judah's not so far off future when the nation of Judah would be brought down. Because of their sin and unbelief, they would be carried off in captivity. And, in fact, that's exactly what happened about 100 years after Isaiah wrote these words. The nation of Babylon invaded the land of Judah; the Babylonians destroyed the city of

Jerusalem-destroyed the temple along with the rest of the city-and they carried many of the Jews off to captivity in Babylon. Many of the people recognized that they were experiencing the discipline and judgment of the Lord. But many of the people also wondered if God had completely given up on them and abandoned them.

That's when the God of all grace spoke up. It was in response to that fear that God had abandoned his people that Isaiah wrote the words of chapter 60 of his prophecy that are before us today. He wanted his people to know that the darkness of their sin and captivity would not last forever. God wanted his people to know that he had not abandoned them in spite of their sins. And so, God spoke to the people of Judah through the prophet Isaiah and said, **"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. ²See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you."**

No doubt, the darkness which Isaiah was talking about here was a reference to Isaiah's original 8th century audience regarding the dark circumstances of their sin and the defeat and captivity of the people of Judah. But in an even bigger and greater way the darkness of which Isaiah speaks is the darkness of unbelief that veils all of our hearts by nature and the darkness of sin that damages our relationship with our God. But into our darkness God has shined his light. For the people of Judah would one day live in captivity and exile in Babylon, this was a promise that God was going to restore the people of Judah and lead them back to resettle in their homeland. And that's exactly what happened. But there's a bigger promise of which God is speaking here. It's the promise whose fulfillment we just celebrated and in which we continue to rejoice today. It's the fact that God sent his shining glory into our world.

So, it was mentioned a couple of times in these first couple verses. In response to the deep darkness of sin and and unbelief, God promises that he will send his glory upon his people-the glory of the Lord. That's something that deserves some explanation. In the Old Testament, the glory of the LORD was a way that God literally, visibly displayed his presence among the Israelites. The glory of the LORD was typically a fiery appearance of some sort. For instance, when Moses was called by the Lord to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and the Lord appeared in that burning bush that did not burn up, that was the glory of the LORD. Or after the Israelites were freed from Egypt, as they were going about the wilderness for those forty years and they were led by that pillar of cloud by day and that pillar of fire by night, that was the glory of the LORD. And after the temple was built in Jerusalem, we're told that this glory of the LORD filled the inner room, the Most Holy Place, in that temple. The glory of the LORD was a special way that God appeared to his people visibly in the Old Testament. It was a visible, fiery appearance because it was how God wanted to communicate to his people that he had a fiery, burning desire to help his people and save them.

Do you remember the words we heard this past Christmas from John chapter 1? The Apostle John wrote, ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** The biggest way that we see the glory of the Lord, the greatest appearance of the glory of the LORD, is when Jesus was born into this world. Jesus is the glory of the LORD. God sent Jesus to us because he wanted to us to see his glory. God sent Jesus into our world because God has a fiery and burning desire to save us from our sins.

Do you feel trapped in a dark prison cell of guilt over your sins? Rise and shine! **"The glory of the LORD rises upon you."** Jesus came into this world and shined the brightness of his forgiveness on hearts darkened by sin. Do you feel feelings of hopelessness, wondering if there's really any purpose to your life? Rise and shine! **"The LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you."** Christ shined the glory of salvation upon you so you would have life forever in his name. God has eternal plans and purposes for you. Do you see how valuable he must consider us to be?

And it's not just eternal plans that God has for us. He also has some amazing plans and purpose for our lives right now. That big purpose for us is something that Isaiah speaks about in the last half of this lesson. God spoke through Isaiah and said, **'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. 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 hip."** So remember that Isaiah was originally addressing Old Testament Jews as he wrote this, and when Isaiah writes "nations will come to your light," "nations" is a reference to the Gentiles. That's the big distinction of race in the biblical worldview, right. Jews and non-Jews, Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were God's special Old Testament people. God brought the Savior into the world through the Jews. Jesus was a Jew. So Isaiah is saying that the Light of the World came from the Jews whom he is addressing here. But Jesus, the saving Light, isn't for the Jews alone. **"Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn."** God always intended the light of Christ's salvation to be for everyone. He is the Savior of the nations. That's the big emphasis

on this Festival of Epiphany. Epiphany means revelation. Today we rejoice in the fact that Jesus has been revealed as the Savior of all people, Jews and Gentiles. That's why we hear the story of the Magi visiting Jesus on this Epiphany Sunday. In fact, Isaiah was alluding and prophesying about the Magi visiting their Newborn King and bringing him gifts when he said, '**And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.**' These Magi, these Gentile Wise Men, were led by God from a distant land to the place where they would find and worship their Savior. And when they found Jesus in Bethlehem, they present him with gifts of gold and incense and myrrh. The story of the Magi reminds us that God wants the people of the nations to be saved. In fact, that's why the Festival of Epiphany is sometimes called the Gentile Christmas. This Savior from the people of the Jews was born for you and me, too. He was born for all people.

And that means that God wants you to share the news of the world's Savior with the world. This is one of the great purposes which God has for our lives. You know, you and I are so blessed to know that we do not dwell in the deep darkness of our sins. We live in the light of Christ. We know where we stand with God. We know we've got heaven to look forward to. It's been given to us as a gift. So give that gift to someone who doesn't yet have it. Every single one of us can think of someone in our lives who is the spiritual equivalent of Andy Dufresne being detained "in the hole." Their soul is in prison. They're covered in darkness. They need freedom. They need light. You can shine that light. You can tell them about freedom in Christ. And when, by God's grace, that person to whom we witnessed our faith listens and believes and comes to know Christ? Truly, I don't think there could be a better feeling. That feeling was what Isaiah was talking about when he said, "**Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy.**" We have seen God's saving glory. Find your joy in sharing Christ's glory with others. Rise and shine! Amen.