

**ISAIAH 60:1–6.** (EHV)

Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD is dawning upon you.  
Look, darkness covers the earth,  
and deep darkness covers the peoples,  
but the LORD will dawn upon you,  
and his glory will be seen over you.  
Nations will walk to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Look up. Look all around and see!  
All of them have been gathered. They are coming to you.  
Your sons will come from far away,  
and people will carry your daughters on their side.  
Then you will look and be radiant.  
Your heart will race with excitement and burst with joy.  
For great riches from the sea will be delivered to you.  
The wealth of the nations will come to you.  
Caravans of camels will cover your land,  
young camels from Midian and Ephah.  
All those from Sheba will come.  
They will carry gold and incense,  
and they will announce the good news of the praise of the LORD.

“Rise and shine!” It’s an encouragement usually given in the morning. It’s an encouragement to get out of bed and meet with the new day with purpose and energy, to accomplish something meaningful.

God encourages us here to rise and shine, not just to get out of bed and make the most of each day, but not to dwell in doom and gloom, to live in happiness and joy, and not just to do so because you only have one life to live so you might as well make the best of it. God encourages us to rise and shine, because that which can truly make us shine, that which can truly give us the utmost and most lasting joy, our Light, has come.

At first it might not seem like we should call this Light *our* Light. The Lord is addressing his chosen Old Testament people, the people of Israel, when he says, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD is dawning upon you.” Much of Isaiah consists of God rebuking his people for their sins and warning them that they will be taken into captivity if they do not repent. But here it is as if God is addressing them after they have been rebuked by him, as they are lying low in their sins and distress, like Job sitting in the ash heap and scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery. God says to them, “Arise and shine! Get up and be happy! Your light, the One whose saving promises have been entrusted to you, has come, and the true glory of the LORD has dawned upon you, not just the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire in the Old Testament, but the One whose actual presence those pillars represented, the Messiah. He has come.”

“Look, darkness covers the earth, and deep darkness covers the peoples, but the LORD will dawn upon you, and his glory will be seen over you.” Mankind itself is described as

darkness by nature, and that is the way they are ever since they fall into sin. Deep darkness covers them, so that even in all their knowledge and undertakings and accomplishments, considered so great by others, it is as if they are wandering aimlessly in thick cloud, and their next step could plunge them into eternal destruction at any time. But God had chosen the nation of Israel to be the recipients of his saving promises. Spiritually speaking, it was as if the sun only rose over them; its rays only struck within their borders. Yes, the Lord himself dawned on them on that holy night in Bethlehem. His glorious splendor was wrapped in human flesh. As the writer to the Hebrews says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (1:3).

So yes, it might initially look like the Lord’s encouragement to rise and shine is not meant for us. But the Lord wants his people to know that this light is not for them to keep to themselves; it is not limited to them. “Nations will walk to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” This light, Jesus Christ, isn’t only meant for them. He stands there in Israel like a lighthouse or beacon for all the nations, drawing them out of darkness into his marvelous light. As God spoke through his prophet earlier, “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). Even kings, the most powerful men on earth who tend to be the most proud and ruthless, even kings will be drawn to that light.

As Israel stands up from their sins and distress and misery, God tells them, “Look up. Look all around and see! All of them have been gathered. They are coming to you. Your sons will come from far away, and people will carry your daughters on their side.” Look how many are coming! Look at what a treasure you have in the Messiah, valuable to people from every nation! Your sons and daughters are no longer just those born within your borders or circumcised on the eighth day; they come from afar and have to be carried. Your sons and daughters are all those drawn to your light, to your Messiah’s forgiveness and salvation.

“Then you will look and be radiant. Your heart will race with excitement and burst with joy.” Instead of being jealous or resentful, if God’s people truly value their Light, they will be glad that it draws all nations. They would be jealous or resentful if they were only concerned about themselves. But if they are concerned about their Light and its radiance, if they truly treasure the Messiah and what he came to bring, then they will be glad that so many people from so many different nations value him and seek him out along with them.

“For great riches from the sea will be delivered to you. The wealth of the nations will come to you. Caravans of camels will cover your land, young camels from Midian and Ephah. All those from Sheba will come. They will carry gold and incense, and they will announce the good news of the praise of the LORD.” God emphasizes not only the great number of people that will come to Jesus, but also the value that they will place on him. People will come from the seas to the west. People will come from the countries to the north, south, and east. And they will bring their most precious gifts, their most expensive gifts to honor him and they will proclaim the good news of his praise, the great things he has done.

Do you see what God did in our Gospel, brothers and sisters? There actually were magi or wise men from the east that visited Jesus; their visit is a historical event. But their visit was

not just recorded at random; it was meant to represent something much larger. By following an actual light to Jesus, by coming from far away, by bringing him their most precious gifts, including the two named here in Isaiah, gold and incense, and by returning to their country to declare his praises, they show that this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is this light of Israel that is also the light of the Gentiles. The account of the magi shows us that the Messiah has come.

So now is the time to rise and shine, now is the time to lift up our heads from our sins, misery, and distress, no matter who we are, and to find our joy and salvation in Jesus. Now is the time to make the pilgrimage in our hearts to Israel, to see Jesus lying in the manger, to see Jesus with his mother Mary, to see Jesus being baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit, to see Jesus performing miracles and forgiving sins, to see Jesus dying and making atonement for the sins of the world, to see Jesus rising triumphantly from the dead.

The birth of Jesus marks the dawn of the day when we are all openly welcomed to come and become true Israelites, to become members of the one, true, holy Christian church. The birth of Jesus marks not only when the light shines out for us, but also when it draws us to itself and shines on us, so that we may then reflect that light to others, drawing more and more to that same light. We draw near to that light and bask in that light by drawing near to Jesus in his Word, and we reflect that light by bringing him our most precious gifts, our firstfruits offerings, and by announcing the good news of his praise, declaring that his life and death is a light bright enough to shine on all people and fill all their hearts with joy and peace.

We did it regularly when we still used the 1993 hymnal. We still do it once in a while in special services. After we celebrate Communion, we sometimes sing the Song of Simeon, in which Simeon declares that Jesus is God's salvation which he has prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel. This is what we are celebrating today, this is what Isaiah, yes, what God himself is celebrating in these words—that it isn't just the Israelites' light that has come. On this Epiphany Sunday, we celebrate that *our* light has come, yours and mine, the light to lighten both the Israelites and all the Gentiles.

So rise and shine—with the glory of your Savior, and to the glory of your Savior. Amen.