



2017 State Missions Sermon By Job Juarez

Isaiah 60:1-3 NLV

“Rise up and shine, for your light has come. The shining-greatness of the Lord has risen upon you. 2 For see, darkness will cover the earth. Much darkness will cover the people. But the Lord will rise upon you, and His shining-greatness will be seen upon you. 3 Nations will come to your light. And kings will see the shining-greatness of the Lord on you.”

Introduction

Hopelessness is a common description of broken people. They have nowhere to turn, nothing they can do to change the circumstances of their lives to where it is livable. The image of light shining in darkness is the most powerful message to give to such hopeless people. No matter how black the darkness and difficult it seems to shrug it off, one needs only think of how turning on a light can bring a whole change to the dismal situation. As we look around us, we see broken people living in perpetual darkness. And we have a powerful message to share with them: the light that comes from God when He sent Jesus Christ into the world. He is the Light that shines in every Christian life.

1. If we belong to Jesus, Rise Up and Shine because the shining-greatness of the Lord has risen upon us (vv1).

In Hebrew, shine and light are two forms of the same word. We could translate this "give light for your light has come." Since the beginning of the second section of Isaiah (40:10), there has been the anticipation of God's "coming" to deliver His people and restore justice to the land. The form of the verb refers to action that has already been completed (has come). Prophets often used this form to refer to God's future activity as

well. Here, as in chapter 59, light is a symbol of God's presence, which brings deliverance and blessing. The language is similar to Isaiah 9 but the imagery is used differently. In chapter 9, the subject is the coming ideal Davidic king whom God will establish to bring peace and justice among his people. Here, there is no mention of the Davidic king; it is God who is at work in historical events to change the present conditions.

The imagery is of the dawning of a new day (v.3) with God himself the sun (vv. 19-20) that dispels the fears and gloominess of the night. God's presence is the light that illuminates a new future for God's people. The contrast of light and darkness is a common metaphor throughout Isaiah (5:30; 13:10; 50:10). John's gospel uses the light/darkness contrast in relation to the coming of the Christ (John 1:4-9; 8:12).

Isaiah is telling us that we have been called out of darkness and into the Lord's marvelous light. We have been set apart, to belong to the Lord, to live as his people. We have an identity and a purpose in life. Do you know that? Do you see yourself, do we see ourselves, in that way? That we have a special calling, that we do not belong in the dark anymore. How did this happen? Because of what the Lord has done. He sent his light to shine upon us. He is the light who dwells among us. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. In Christ, we see God for who he is for us. We see a gracious God in the face of Christ. Otherwise, we would not know God as he wants to be known. We would be lost, knowing that there must be a god or gods up there somewhere, and we would feel a sense of guilt and separation and even hatred or resentment toward God. But we wouldn't know how to fix it. And we couldn't, anyway.

2. If we belong to Jesus, we become aware of the darkness that covers the people (vv2).

Why is it so important that our light has come? Because otherwise we would be sitting in the dark. Isaiah says so: "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples." Spiritual darkness – being in the dark about God, about ourselves, and what life is really all about. That is the natural condition of mankind since sin entered the world. We're all just groping around in the dark, not knowing where we came from or where we're going or which is the right path to take. Even if we know the right way to go, we keep wandering off the path and getting lost. That describes the spiritual darkness that shrouds sinful mankind. Look at how lost and clueless so many people are around us. De-churched neighbors, unchurched relatives, atheists and agnostics and post-modernists, who have no interest in what they disparagingly call "organized religion." They all have lost their way. They all are fumbling around in the dark. So much spiritual darkness to go around. But they are not the only ones. Before we get too proud and haughty, let's take a look at our own darkness. Israel of old was suffering the consequences of their own dalliance with darkness. They thought they knew better than what the prophets were preaching. They became like all the other nations around them, thinking they could go it on their own, without listening to God's word.

As a result, they were driven out of the land and taken into exile. The depressing darkness of the Babylonian Captivity fell upon the people, and they suffered from their own foolishness. Even we, despite belonging to the light of Christ, sometimes walk in darkness through our obsessive consumerism and apathy. Even as God's people, the church, we fall into the old ways, into the ways of the world. We tune out God's Word which warns us against wrong turns and dead ends. We listen to the siren song of the world, luring us to steer in that direction, and we end up crashing on the rocks. We indulge our flesh and our desires, even when we know it's wrong. That's dancing in the dark. That's stepping out of the light and turning back to where we should not go. And we all do it

3. If we belong to Jesus, we invite the nations to the shining-greatness of the Lord (vv3).

The gospels tell us God directed some foreigners, some outsiders, to make a long trek to find him. For this Jesus is not just the king of the Jews. He is the king of all peoples, of all nations. He's the king of the Gentiles, too. And God wants everybody to know it.

Isaiah saw this coming, the nations coming to meet the Messiah: "And nations 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. . . . A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD" (Isaiah 60:4,6).

What a joy it is to know you have a Savior, when you've been sitting in darkness. This changes everything. Praise the Lord, I saw the light! And so did you. The Spirit will lead you in the light, and back to the light, whenever you drift off the path.

And so now this is your time to shine. You and I— we Christians shine like stars in a world of thick darkness. "Let your light so shine among men that they see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven." Let people see Jesus in you and through you. With your deeds and your words. Are there people you know— friends, relatives, associates, neighbors—are there people in your circle of relationships for whom you could be a star leading them to Jesus? Leading them here, to the church, where Jesus is? Ask God to help you let your light shine, that you manifest Jesus. So that you love and serve your neighbor with the love that flows through you as a Christian. We must be providing light so that those who are lost can find their way to heaven. Without the light of Christ shining through us our unbelieving neighbors and co-workers will stumble in their search for peace and satisfaction. Think, for a moment, of the plight of those unreached by the Gospel. Millions do not know anything but spiritual darkness because no one has shared with them the Light that has come into the world

Conclusion

Kentucky, like Isaiah's world, is dark. Thick darkness is over the peoples. But the darkness, thank God, does not have the last word. You see, Christ the Light has come and the glory of the Lord shines upon us. And, we are now "Carriers of the Light." So I want to challenge you: reflect the light of Christ; show others the way to God and heaven; be "Carriers of the Light."



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