

February 2017

Dear Friends,

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. ² For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. ³ And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”
Isaiah 60:1-3

According to the Christian calendar, after the Christmas season we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord; God making His Son known to the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles alike. The Festival of the Epiphany is the celebration of the visitation of the Christ-child by the wise men. God leads the wise men to His Son by way of a mysterious star that moves through the sky. During this season, we also hear of the baptism of Jesus. As Jesus comes out of the water, the Holy Spirit descends on Him as a dove, and God the Father speaks ***“This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*** **Matthew 3:17** In subsequent Sundays, we hear how Christ is made known through His teaching and through His miracles. The Epiphany season ends with the Festival of the Transfiguration, where God once again declares that Jesus is His Son and calls us to listen to Him.

Sin causes distracts us from the things that matter most. It draws our attention to the cares of this world, encouraging us to be guided by feelings, circumstances or reason, instead of listening to God’s Word. Sin clouds our vision of who God is and who we are. Celebrating Epiphany clears our vision by directing our focus back to Christ Himself. The German pastor and theologian Helmut Thielicke gives us this wonderful analogy:

“If I look at a piece of fabric through a magnifying glass, I find that it is perfectly clear around the center of the glass, but around the edges it tends to become distorted. But this does not mislead me into thinking that the fabric itself is confused at this point. I know that this is caused by an optical illusion and therefore by the way in which I am looking at it. And so it is with the miracle of knowledge bestowed upon me by the Christmas event: If I see the world through the medium of the Good News, then the center is clear and bright. There I see the miracle of the love that descends to the depths of life. On the periphery, however, beyond the Christmas light, confusion and distortion prevail. The ordered lines grow tangled, and the labyrinthine mysteries of life threaten to overwhelm me. Therefore our sight, which grows aberrant as it strays afield, must recover its perspective by returning to the thematic center. The extraordinary thing is that the mystery of life is illuminated not by a formula but rather by another mystery, namely, the News, which can only be believed and yes is hardly believable, that God has become a human being and that now I am no longer alone in the darkness.”

At the Cross, God dispelled the darkness of sin through the death and Resurrection of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We are now forgiven, cleansed by the blood of Christ and quickened to newness of life, so that we might ***“Arise, shine, for thy Light has come.”***

“...Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
Hebrews 12:2

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Chuck Bylkas



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