

The Light

December 2, 2018

Isaiah 60:1-3

1 Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. 2 For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. 3 Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Isaiah chapter 59 ends with the announcement that God will come to Zion as Redeemer. Zion is synonymous with Jerusalem, or the land of Israel, or God's people. Isaiah is a prophet during the Exile. As a prophet he delivers the word of God to the people of God. The word of God that is delivered through Isaiah provides great hope to the desperate people. So, having received God's promise (God will come to Zion as Redeemer), the people have hope. They have something to look forward to - a promise from God - the advent of the redeemer. They have hope that God will come to rescue the people. They have hope that God will re-establish the nation.

The light is a metaphor that means a whole lot more than the word "light." The people are in exile, they have been conquered. The people are in darkness. This is a state of being, they are lost, depressed, hopeless, despondent. But they will see the light. So, they have hope and glory. I was in a cave many years ago as a tourist. They had lights so we could see everything. In middle of tour, in the middle of the cave, they cut off the lights and we were in complete darkness. There was absolute zero light, zero visibility, 100% black. I could not see my hand in front of my face. When people get trapped in a cave they greatest thing is a little spark of light. That spark of light means much more than the word "light." It means being rescued, having hope for survival, life, and air. The light means everything for the hopeless. God makes a promise to the people who are trapped, conquered, captured, exiled, that they are going to be saved. God promises to the people the light of the Lord; the light of God's glory for Zion. A very important aspect of the light is its divine source. The light which the people seek is the light that is promised by God. This is an occasion to rejoice and celebrate this wonderful good news.

The light is also symbolic with significant theological meaning, from the Old Testament, from prophetic testimony, from the ministry of Jesus, and from the New Testament ministry. One example of the theological symbolism of the light as found in the Old Testament comes from our Scripture reading today. As I mentioned in the introduction - Isaiah presents hope. Salvation is promised. God will come to Zion as Redeemer. God will save the people. The people have hope because on the horizon, in the future, is glory. The light of the Lord will shine. Examples of the theological symbolism of the light come from prophetic testimony in the New Testament. Zechariah (the father of John the Baptist) spoke prophecy. He said that his son John will give light to those who sit in darkness. Simeon, a righteous man, said that it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would see the Messiah. When he saw Jesus he testified "My eyes have seen your salvation a light for revelation to the Gentiles." In the prologue of the Gospel of John, the word became life and it was the light of all people. Also John the Baptist came to testify to the light. The ministry of Jesus is another example of the theological symbolism of the light. In the Gospel of John the light has come into the world (3:19). Jesus said "I am the light of the world" (8:12, 9:5), "the light is with you" (12:35), "I have come as light into the world" (12:46). Theological symbolism of the light is also seen in New Testament ministry. In Acts chapter 9 Saul was on way to Damascus when suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. In Acts chapter 12 Peter was in prison when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light

shone in the cell. So, the light has significant theological meaning in several places throughout Bible. The light means everything - wisdom, knowledge, sight, revelation, and hope.

The contemporary lesson for us is what the light represents. We have our Christmas decorations; the lighted tree, the advent wreath, and all the lighted decorations. They all represent the light which is symbolic of God's gift of redemption. With the decorations and the liturgical colors it is easy to see that Christmas is coming. We easily recognize the signs, all the decorations, Christmas songs, programs, and movies. Today is the beginning of Advent, a very special season. As we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus let us make sure we honor with reverence this special occasion as we celebrate the hope that was promised by God.