

## **The Lord Will Arise Upon You     January 6, 2019**

### **Isaiah 60:1-7**

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. 4 Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. 5 Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. 6 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 proclaim the praise of the LORD. 7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall be acceptable on my altar, and I will glorify my glorious house.

Wow, the new year is here already. Today is Epiphany, it ends the season of Christmas and commemorates the gifts from the Magi to Jesus. Today is also the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my becoming a pastor. The timing was one of coincidence. It took several months. I had to talk with the regional minister, be endorsed by a local congregation, obtain references, and be interviewed by the search committee, and then meet with the congregation. After a sermon and the congregation calling a meeting to vote on me I was hired to start on the first day of the century. Now it is 19 years later so this will be my 19<sup>th</sup> sermon on epiphany. I find myself challenged to deliver the same message in a different light. Like Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, Epiphany has to be about Epiphany. I have always used Matthew because that is where we find the story of the Magi looking for Jesus and finding the young child in a house to present him with specific gifts. However, today I use Scripture from the Old Testament book of Isaiah which provides a very interesting connection.

There it is! Isaiah chapter 60 - your light has come, the LORD will arise upon you, and nations will come to your light. The Magi were not Jews. But it is obvious that they had some knowledge about God's promised redeemer, the Messiah. We do not know what knowledge they had but it is a possibility that they access to Isaiah. What I am saying is it could be a possibility, not a fact, but a possibility, that they knew these words "your light has come, the LORD will arise upon you, and nations shall come to your light." So, it could be that the Magi were looking for the Lord's light. It could be that they felt responsible, as world leaders, to come to the light and represent their nations. It could be that they knew to follow the words of Isaiah and bring gold and frankincense in order to proclaim the praise of the LORD. It could be possible. I'm not saying it happened this way but it sure is a very interesting connection

In the Secret Place devotional a question is asked "What if the shepherds had not gone in search of Jesus?" The same question is relevant of the magi. What if they had not gone in search of Jesus? The question remains true for us today. What if we do not search for Jesus? Not that we have to in order to be a Christian. However, if you are a Christian (and we all confess to be) you will be devoted to living by the word of Christ and this takes serious study, prayer, and reflection. It would have been easy for the shepherds to ignore the angels and stay in place to tend to the sheep. We are thankful that we have the story of how they search for and found the baby in a manger. It would have been easier still for the Magi to ignore their knowledge and instinct and rationalize that it is way too far and too dangerous so it is best to just stay at home.

We are thankful that we have the story of their search for Jesus to pay homage by presenting specific gifts to the little child Jesus.

It is easy for us today to sleep in and enjoy the comfort of home and watch TV. The reality is you have to actively seek God in order to know who God is and what God wants. It takes sincere love and appreciation to make a commitment to exchange a life of comfort to praise and glorify God. The journey the shepherds took and the journey the magi took is the journey we are to take. To give up the comfortable life and earnestly seek Jesus. Going to church does not make you a Christian. Besides, we don't come to church, we come to worship. You come to worship God because you love God and you appreciate everything God has done for you. You come to worship because you put a priority on expressing thanks and glory to God over all of the distractions that life throws at you. I'm going to repeat that for emphasis. You come to worship because you put a priority on expressing thanks and glory to God over all of the distractions that life throws at you. In a world of about 300 million people only a handful - a very few - actively searched for the Christ child.

I ask you to reminisce with me. Indulge in life's most enjoyable memories. The most precious thing of all is a new born baby. It is pure, innocent, soft, and tender. It is totally helpless and dependant. Jesus came just as pure, sweet, innocent, and helpless as any other child in the history of earth. But this baby is different. This baby is the one that was written about. This is the one that the angels talked about. This is the one that God promised. This is the child that was revealed through the prophets when they said "The Lord will arise upon you."

Now, you can do what is popular today. Or, you can devote your life to the quest - search for Christ, find Christ, and follow Christ. To search for Christ is a quest to study the word and lessons that he taught. To find Jesus is to reflect on the life you live as a contrast to the life Jesus lived and earnestly seek to resolve the differences. Whatever your concern in life is look to Jesus for direction and guidance. Follow the example he lived and the lessons he taught. Through the grace of God we have the promised redeemer. Through the grace of God we have salvation. The question remains. What is your response to God's grace?