

Rising Light  
Isaiah 60:1-6  
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Have you ever heard of Seasonal Affect Disorder or S.A.D.? It's also known as the winter blues. It is an emotional disorder that some people experience during the darker months of the year. People who suffer from S. A. D. Have little energy and depression. They may have a tendency to over eat or not eat enough. They also may try to fix it by self-medicating, either with drugs or alcohol. Some may even fall into a self-destructive pattern of excessive gambling, or even doing something illegal.

For many though, it doesn't have to be winter for them to suffer from the darkness of depression. Studies have shown that the rate of depression in this country has risen dramatically in the past 50 years. According to the centers for disease control and prevention, depression is the second leading cause of disability for those between the ages of 15 to 44. During their lifetime, most people will experience acute depression at least three times.

It also says that depression is linked to such things as divorce and the death of a loved one, and is very much connected to the 35,000 suicides that occur in the United States every year. Well, in that passage from Isaiah, that we read today, it spoke of a thick darkness covering the earth and the people. Believe me, this is as true today as it was in the time of Isaiah.

So, let's take a look at this darkness. Isaiah begins in describing the contrast between the light and the darkness. He writes, "Arise, shine, for your Light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people; but the Lord will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you." (Isaiah 60:1-2)

Folks, this kind of imagery is found throughout this chapter. For example, the word "light" appears seven times. Plus, there are other words that refer to the light, such as shine, brightness, splendor, glory, radiant, as well as others. What I'm getting at is that this is a chapter of light.

Now, that's important, because the previous chapter, chapter 59, is definitely all about darkness. In fact, it is one of the darkest chapters in the Bible. For example, words describing darkness depression and death appear 17 times in just the first eight verses. It uses such words as iniquity, sin, defilement, deceit, wickedness, disorder, vanity, turmoil, violence, evil, destructiveness, And devastation. Then it goes on to say that justice, salvation, and righteousness are far, far away. Isaiah was very clear about how Israel had separated themselves from God and His salvation.

So, hopefully you can see that there is a huge contrast between the darkness of chapter and the light rising upon the people in chapter 60. And this contrast is still very much with us today. Folks, we live in the world of Isaiah 59. This world is a very dark place. We see this all around us. We see it in the news and on the Internet. We see it on television and in what Hollywood is trying to cram down our throats. We see it in our schools and

universities. We see it in our courts, right up to the highest court in the land. We see it in the realm of politics, Right up to the highest office in the land. We see it in how millions upon millions have been butchered in the mother's womb, and yet the outcry to try to stop this madness has only come from a few. We see it in many mainline Christian denominations with their "pick and choose" theology, who in many ways, have thrown the Bible away, and are preaching and teaching what this society says is right and wrong. We see in our friends, and family members, and even in ourselves, when we knowingly and willingly turn away from the Lord and His word and we do what is right in our own eyes. That is when we know so well, this separation from God, a separation that sin has caused. Do you see what I mean? That thick darkness is still all around us. It has even crept into our life. We are definitely living in the world of Isaiah 59.

However, the great news is, we have Isaiah 60. Yes, there is darkness in this world, darkness that is all around us. And yes, we all know what it's like to live in the darkness of sin. But, boy oh boy, just as Isaiah 60 says, you and I, we can rise and shine because our Light has come. Folks, I cannot emphasize enough that this is the truth that we must take hold of and never let go. There are entirely too many of us who are living in that darkness of sin that separates us from God, and fills us with guilt and doubt and fear. And there is absolutely no reason why we have to live that way. The light is right here before us. Jesus is that light that has completely shattered the darkness of this world and the darkness that is in our life.

Scripture shows us this so clearly. Jesus whole life was all about this. Look at what Simeon said about Jesus when he was just a baby. "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; from my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel." (Luke 2:29–32) Look at what Jesus said about himself. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (Luke 8:12) Jesus is indeed the "light of the world" , who took on flesh, so that He might hold us in His arms, and heal our hurts, and forgive our sins, and totally destroyed that darkness in us.

Let me show you something. In John's Gospel it says, " the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. " (John 1:5). Well the verb, is in the present tense here. In other words, John doesn't write " the light shone" or "the light will shine". "The light shines in the darkness" that means that no matter how dark it is around you or in you, even in the darkest hour of your life, "The light shines" The darkness has not, nor will it ever overcome the light of Christ.

That is why the manger can never be separated from the cross. The light came into this world for one reason and one reason only, to destroy the darkness. And that's exactly what Jesus did on the cross. When Jesus hung on the cross it looked as though darkness had indeed overcome the light. But with Jesus resurrection He proved His sacrifice had shattered the darkness of sin and death forever.

This is what I want you to understand, " the light shines" Present tense! That means, when there is a sin that drags you down into that dark pit, "The light shines" When you feel so far away from the Lord, way down with guilt, doubt, fear. "The light shines"

When you become so overwhelmed by that darkness that you see in this world, "the light shines" darkness can never overcome our Lord and Savior. And because of that, the darkness can never overcome you. The light of your crucified and risen Lord has completely destroyed that darkness.

Even the darkness of death cannot overcome you. You have been delivered from that dominion of darkness and have been brought into the kingdom of light. Or, as Jesus put it, "you have already crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24). You see, the darkness of death must yield to the light of resurrection, a light that can never be extinguished. In fact, look what it says about this light in the book of Revelation. It speaks of Christ bringing us home to the new Jerusalem, "where night will be no more. They will need no light of a lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever." (Rev 22:5) Yes, the darkness in this world is still very thick. And yes, that darkness can indeed creep into our life, and we can find ourselves living in the darkness. But it doesn't have to be that way. We can "arise and shine, for our light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us." Understand, even though we are living in the world of Isaiah 59, we can actually live in Isaiah 60. That light of Christ is in us right now, and it is a light that can never be overcome by the darkness. That means that we can live our life, today, in the warmth and brightness of this light, and so my prayer for us today is that, no matter how dark it may get in this world and in our life, you and I will always cling to this truth, "the light shines" and praise God for that. Amen.