

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

January 7, 2024

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 60: 1-6

Responsive Reading; Psalm 72: 1-14

Epistle Reading; Ephesians 3: 1-12

Gospel Reading; Matthew 2: 1-12

**Sermon;**

**Arise, Shine!**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: We have seen and testified that this is “Son of Man.”  
Behold the Lamb of God. (John 1: 34 & 36)

Arise, shine for your light has come! “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

A light has come, and it is a star that shone in the East. It did not come to a little town in Judea called Bethlehem. It came to the entire world and was seen by pagan rulers in a land hundreds of miles from Bethlehem. This light came to and was

interpreted by “Wise Men” who did not even worship God as we know Him. Although they did not know God, they did know that this was a big deal and was someone who would change history.

Matthew says in chapter 5:14-15, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”

In our Old Testament lesson Isaiah is predicting the coming of the Messiah but Isaiah is limited to the Jewish understanding of a Messiah that will conquer the world, rule the world, and subjugate all nations under His power. Because of this power all nations would bring tributes, sort of like terms of surrender. Today we would say that Isaiah was predicting the second coming rather than the manger version. In Isaiah 60:6 he sees the Kings bringing only gold and incense. The gift of myrrh would have predicted suffering of Christ,

It seems that Isaiah was predicting the second coming where there would be no suffering. Only gold-a symbol of deity, glory, and frankincense-the fragrance of life and sinless perfection were brought.

The light would come, and it would not be hidden under a basket but would give light to the whole house, not just that little room that the Hebrews called home. The house is the

world and not just the land of Israel and Judea. This is a really big deal. This means that the light will make the entire world the chosen people of God.

Our Psalm says that this King i.e., this light, would be so glorious that oppressors would be eliminated, the sun and moon would overcome all darkness and justice and righteousness would abound throughout the land.

In Ephesians Paul makes it abundantly clear that the gifts of God were being made available to all peoples, Jews, and Gentiles alike, and that this has been proven by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

This is a wake-up call to the world.

When I was 8 to 10 years old, and my sister was 14 to 16, we had a terrible time getting up in the morning to go to school. Mom would gently call us, and we would go right back to sleep. Then we would have to gulp our breakfast and run out the door to catch the bus that was already taking off without us. Mom got tired of this and changed her tactics. Instead of gently calling us she would lean into the brick and plaster stairway and call out in the most horrendous voice possible. Maybe this would be a good time for ear plugs. RISEEEE AND SHINEEEE! To this my sister and I would spring out of our respective beds yelling back to her, “We’re up, we’re up, we’re up already!”

It got our attention and it got results.

This is exactly what our scriptures are trying to do for us today. The Isaiah and Psalm reading talk of a glorious day coming when everything would change for the better. There would be light and hope and justice. The glory of God would rise upon us and gentiles and kings would see it. Paul explains that no one from days past had the whole picture but through Jesus Christ we are all eligible to be adopted into the family of God.

Finally, the Gospel gives us an account in history that should have made us jump out of bed and exclaim, "I'm up already, I'm up and ready to face the day and exclaim the truth."

A star appeared in the East that was so bright that, "It continued both day and night." This star was so bright and so rare that it attracted the attention of astronomers all over the world. Non-believers packed up their belongings and gifts to travel days or even years to see for themselves what thing could cause such a reaction by the very stars in the sky.

Pagans came to worship Jesus while the leaders of the "chosen people" plotted to kill the child that would upset their status-quo. Gentiles accepted Jesus and Jesus accepted them, or should I say Jesus accepted US,

Arise and shine and give God glory. A star lit up the sky and showed Wise (non-knowing God) Men the way to Jesus and

now it is our turn. Arise, Shine, be the light that leads the world, or at least our part of it, to Jesus. Unlock the door and turn on the light!

We have seen and testified that this is the “Son of Man” Behold the “Lamb of God.” Unlock the door, turn on the light and testify to the light. It is our turn. Arise and shine and help your neighbor to catch the bus.

Hallelujah and Amen!