“***Arise and Shine***” by S. Finlan, at The First Church, Jan. 19, 2019

**Isaiah 60:1–4**

1 Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. 2For 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.

**John 1:32–35, 40–42**

32John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” 34And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.” 35The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples. . .

40One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.41He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). 42He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

We have had a season of joy, hope, and gratitude about the gift of Jesus, but sometimes we have to go through times of sadness. Today’s first message was given to Judah during a period of hardship. Isaiah 60 was written during a time of weakness and poverty in Judah. “Arise and shine for . . . the glory of the Lord has risen upon you” was a promise they needed to hear. Try to imagine how it would sound to you if you had relatives who were fugitives or exiles in Babylon or other foreign lands, and you heard “your sons shall come from far away,” returning to you (60:4). Your country, Judah, will shine, and “nations shall come to your light” (60:3), even bringing their treasure. You can see that there is still a strong distinction between Jews and Gentiles, here, and this is a distinctly *Jewish* hope, a hope that lived for hundreds of years.

Another part of their hope, of course, was for a new anointed one, a Messiah, which, in Greek, is “*Christos*,” or “Christ.” That brings us to the gospel reading. Even though the word “Messiah” does not occur, John the Baptizer speaks of the one on whom the Spirit descended, who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, and who is even the Son of God (John 1:33–34). Who else could this be, but the hoped-for deliverer?

After the Baptizer, who is the next one to recognize Jesus as Messiah? It seems to be Andrew. Actually there are two of John’s disciples standing with him by the Jordan that day. One is not named, and one is Andrew. The other is almost certainly John, the son of Zebedee, who is never named in the Gospel of John.

But let’s talk about Andrew. How often do we hear about him? Andrew is really the underrated player of the year. He is the first named disciple of Jesus. He goes to his more famous brother and says “we have found the Messiah” (John 1:41), and leads his brother to Jesus. At that point Jesus gives Andrew’s brother his nickname, “Rock.” Because that’s what the Greek word *Petros* and the Aramaic word *Cephas* mean.

Who the Messiah *is*, really matters. It makes a difference whether you follow a false Messiah into confusion and evil, or you follow Jesus into discernment and service. “We have found the Messiah” changes Andrew’s and Peter’s lives—and ours. Finding the Messiah is a fulfillment of hope.

The Isaiah passage expressed an intense hope for rescue, for a blessing and uplifting of the nation. I think the *spiritual* part—but not the *national* part —of those yearnings are fulfilled in the Messiah Jesus, in his life, his proclamation of salvation, and in that profound blessing which is the Spirit, which he poured out on Pentecost. This is “the Spirit of Truth [who] will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Of course, this Spirit and this Messiah are for everyone, not just for Judah.

So we see both of these passages have hope and promise, and I see them both as stories of God’s generosity. I also see God’s *light* in both of them, since the Spirit is luminous, and the Spirit descends and remains on the Messiah. I’m going to unite these two patterns and say that these are stories of hope, of God’s light coming to earth and shining upon its peoples. For Isaiah, the people urgently needed hope that there would be relief from poverty and weakness, so that they might endure. The gospel says more. It is about hope *fulfilled*, coming not so much with outward changes but with inward power, with an experience of spiritual growth that gives a different kind of hope.

It sounds like serious stuff. And yet, with Jesus, it is often played out in an easy-going manner, as we see when he gives one of his disciples the nickname “Rock,” which has to have *some* humor in it. And it continues later in the chapter, when Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael to follow him, and he jokingly compliments the latter, saying “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit” (1:47 NIV). This is darkly humorous, since it implies that it is *surprising* to meet an Israelite who is notdeceitful. We see that Jesus can be lighthearted and even a bit salty. He takes a dig at his own nationality, showing that he is no nationalist.

So God and the Spirit shine upon Jesus, and Jesus shines on the five earliest disciples: Andrew, an unnamed disciple who is probably the Apostle John, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. These men, along with John the Baptist, *recognize* Jesus as the Messiah, and that becomes the foundation of a new movement.

In fact, the two identifying features of this movement are Messiah-recognition and Spirit-reception. The hopes of the past are now realized in the living Christ, and in the reception of the Spirit. What we value above all is Christ himself. And we need the Spirit, if we would have any joy in our religion.

In the last part of the sermon, I’ll focus on *our* experience. Each person’s experience is unique. Baptism in the Spirit is something that may happen to us unconsciously. It may come in the course of our reflection. It is not always intense and emotional or accompanied by signs and wonders. It can happen while you sit in the pews and listen. Or it can happen when you are driving home and you think “I really am lucky to know Jesus.” It could happen while you’re reading. In fact, it may have happened when you were twelve years old. It is probably not possible to recall exactly when you were baptized in the Spirit. The actual baptism may have happened some time before you became strongly *conscious* of being a Christian. By the time you became conscious of the fact that you were being guide into truth, you had already been born again. By the time you can talk about Jesus, you’ve already been visited by him in your heart.

So, even though it is not easy to precisely identify the moment at which you were baptized in the Holy Spirit, it is comforting to think about it. You can ask yourself what is the evidence that it has happened. Is it that you bear the fruits of the Spirit, the love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, and gentleness about which Paul wrote (Gal 5:22–23)? Is it that you possess the three great virtues of faith, hope, and love, also found in Paul’s writings (1 Thess 1:3; 5:8)? Or is it the statement that believers will be known by their love for one another (John 13:35)? These are all spiritual fruits, and with them *you* contribute to the kingdom of God on earth.

We can say, like Andrew, “we have found the Messiah.” And, like the Baptizer, we can say “he baptizes with the Holy Spirit”—and nothing in our lives is ever the same again! We experience Truth inwardly, and hope and joy are the natural result. As the inner life is changed, our outer life changes, and we have an effect on the world, bringing a bit more of heaven into the earth life. What good reason to arise and shine!