

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen

Epiphany – Morning Prayers (2022)

Christ, the Light of the World

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“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1, ESV)

The OT Reading for Epiphany reveals the glorious vision of Isaiah, a vision of the coming Christ. Having spent much of his days rebuking God’s people for their lack of faith, Isaiah can see the darkness which covers much of Israel, but in his vision, Isaiah sees the darkness being displaced by a bright light that is coming over Zion, that is the Lord rising over Zion and His glory is seen by all (v.2). Moreover, Isaiah sees the people moving toward the light, and ***“they all gather together,”*** coming to the Lord. In his vision Isaiah sees the Lord’s sons and daughters coming from afar, drawn to the Light (v. 4). But this is no ordinary Light, for this Light is *Christ, the Light of the World.*

When Isaiah says that ***“darkness shall cover the earth,”*** (v. 2) he is describing humanity in its natural state. To be sure, humanity has the capacity for doing great things. Man has produced great philosophers, orators, poets, artists, scientists, and so much more. Furthermore, through these human vocations man, in his own eyes, has flourished. But regardless of these great human attributes and the civilizations they created, man could not by his own reason and strength produce spiritual light or gain the true knowledge of God and salvation. So from Eden until today, the natural state of the world is a world filled with vices and abominations.

But against this backdrop of gross darkness God had a plan. In the fullness of time God would cause the brightness of His glory to rise over Bethlehem at the Incarnation of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In Him the greatest glory of God would appear; a glory greater than the glory of His omnipotence, wisdom, and holiness; that is, the glory of His love and grace. St. John tells us, ***“We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”*** (John 1:14, ESV) and our Lord Himself declared, ***“I am the light of the world . . . the light of life.”*** (John 8:12, ESV)

The light of OT prophecy was only the dawn preceding the coming of the true Light. So today the Church of the NT is called upon to hold high the torch of truth, and thereby let the true *Light of the World* shine into the dark hearts and souls of men by faithfully preaching the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ Jesus.

Yet, there are those who say: “The vision of Isaiah was grand indeed, but the fulfillment, as we see it, does not measure up. The Church is weak, it is only a little flock, its efforts are feeble. Yes, it sends missionaries to the masses of unbelievers, but what are they among so many? Where is the abundance of the sea, as spoken of by Isaiah? Where, as Isaiah said, are the floods of Gentiles flocking to Christ? Are not these members of the Church, these missionaries, nothing more than simply people who indulge in dreams of the millennium when Christ shall visibly reign over the earth from Jerusalem, when the kings of the earth shall pay homage to Him, when unbelievers will be converted to Christ by the thousands, and when the saints will be resurrected from the dead to rule with Christ in happiness and splendor for a thousand years? Well, if this is true, we might as well close our Bibles and sit back and wait for Isaiah’s prophecy to be fulfilled.

But there is no need to wait. We do not need to sigh: ***“Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!”*** (Psalm 14:7, *ESV*) It has come in Christ! At His birth the angels sang, ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*** (Luke 2:14, *ESV*) The Gentiles *have come* and *are coming* to His Light. The Good Shepherd is bringing Jews and Gentiles together into one flock. We see it in today’s Gospel Reading: Wise men coming from the East. Since that time there has been a continuous stream of people coming to the Light because the Church is still busy with her task of completing the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in the way God prescribed: by bringing the light of the Gospel to men and thereby kindling faith in their hearts for God’s holy Son, *Christ, the Light of the world*.

This is the purpose for which the glory of God has appeared in the Christ: to drive the darkness of unbelief, ignorance, and sin out of man’s heart, to enlighten him with the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that he may be saved by the Light and out of his enlightened heart, he may then lead others to the Light that they, too, may be enlightened, rescued from ***“the domain of darkness and transferred . . . to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*** (Colossians 1:12–14, *ESV*)

Yes, the Light has shown in the darkness, but sadly, there are still so many who are living in the dark. They have no joy in the Light of the world because they do not understand the darkness of ignorance and sin, they do not understand that by nature they are born spiritually blind, dead in their trespasses and sins. They do not understand that they need a Savior. All this is true because it is offensive to man’s pride that he should think he is utterly lost and unable to save himself. But it is against this stubbornness that God sent His Son into the world to be the Light of truth, to do for man what he cannot do for himself, save himself from sin, death, and the devil.

God’s word of the Gospel convinces man that the *Christ, the Light of the World* came into this world to give His life for their salvation. The Gospel shows man that Christ fulfilled the Law in their place, thereby rescuing them from the Law, and that through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, man is brought out of the darkness and into the light of God’s loving grace. To rescue man from his lost condition, Christ, the Light of the World, sends the Holy Spirit to man to make him alive, giving him the gift of faith to believe in the promises of the Gospel, thereby changing his heart as he hears the Gospel: the Good News of life in Christ Jesus. No longer misunderstanding, but fully believing in the salvation won for him by Christ Jesus, man now wondrously and willingly glorifies *Christ, the Light of the World*. With his heart filled with the joy of salvation, man now says, with the full certainty of faith: “Christ is the Light of the World and my Light and Salvation.”

Thus, it is to such people that Isaiah cries out: ***“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.”*** The Church and her ministers also say, “Hear the word of the Gospel, which opens wide the window of your heart and mind, through that word Christ will enlighten and save you; He will drive away the darkness of the old Adam with its doubts and fears, affections and lusts, and replace them with a willing spirit that seeks the brightness of the Light, a spirit that seeks *Christ, the Light of the World*. In the name of Jesus Amen.

May the Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.