

December 24, 2017

Isaiah 60:1-6

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.

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In these deepest nights of the year, it is marvellous to consider God's hallowing of darkness. God does not destroy darkness. Instead it becomes the canvas upon which God's illumination is made brilliant. The light of light, the Christ-child, arrives in darkness to bring enlightenment to the world. Yet God resides in darkness, and we see as in a mirror dimly. We cannot comprehend the light.

Only at the end of days will we truly see face to face, when the dawn of Christ returns in glory. No more hidden motives, fear, secrets, or grudges, all will be drawn into the light. We will be seen, as Oliver Cromwell once boldly asked to be painted, "warts and all!"

Darkness is God's gift to us. It hides our shame and covers our nakedness. But for God the night is as bright as day. God sees our totality, loves us, and by grace covers us so we may prepare to receive the light.

God comes to us in Jesus so as not to put us to shame like a faint candle in the night, which is easily snuffed out. But one day he will come in full radiance as the King of kings ushering an untameable blaze of joy.

Prayer

O Light Eternal, to whose dawning humanity lifts its darkened face, shine on us gathered who wait for you. Pierce the shadows that hide us from you and illumine our gloom of unbelief. May everyone who watches with us see the Son of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings.