

**SERMON: “Arise & Shine: A Rising Light.”**

Rev. Geoff Ross Sunday, November 29, 2020, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church.

Over the short 3-week series “From Egypt to the Promised Land” we heard about how our difficulties with dealing with the COVID19 pandemic – our discouragement/despair/doubts are not new: the People of God went through the same experience during their 40-year journey through the wilderness. In talking with my mother (see watches our Facebook services!), she asked why there wasn’t any resolution to the ‘journey’? I replied by saying; “we’re not out of the ‘wilderness’ yet.” And that’s true – with COVID19/our discouragement/doubts/not to mention our anxieties about politics/money/crime-violence – we’re still, very much in the midst of the ‘darkness’.

*[Again: not new! Isaiah 59/Darkest chapter in Bible-words describing darkness/depression/despair/death-17xs in 8verses! Words: ‘iniquity/sin/defilement/deceit; wickedness/disorder/turmoil; violence/evil/destruction’ no-hope/justice/salvation/hope-far/away: even God is appalled. The PoG felt lost/abandoned/confused/unworthy/unloved –they knew that God’s wrath was justified: but....]*

Like the People of God/we live in a Isaiah 59/world filled with darkness/despair/death – but in verse 16, God chooses to fight for us/renew His covenant with us/to move toward us/save us/send His ‘Light: into our darkness/world/to give us hope. And like God’s people before us, we’re waiting (Advent means ‘waiting’ the ‘arrival/to come’). It’s into this darkness that Isaiah boldly announces, “*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 peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you*” (Isaiah 60:1-2). And God’s light begins to break through the darkness.

*[Isaiah/‘light’ imagery-chapter 60: Word “light,” appears 7xs/others include: “shine”/“brightness”/“radiant”/“splendor”/“beautify”/“glory”/“glorious”; “sun”/“moon”/“stars” Most references to “light” in Bible/prophecy of light/hope!]*

And this is what we’ll hear throughout Advent/Christmas: that God’s promised “Light” will come/prophecy prepares the way for an even greater light show! And it did! This is the message of Christ’s birth/told by angels/ “*glory/light of the Lord shone around them*”(Luke 2:9). Simeon later/celebrates, “*A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel*”(Luke 2:32). The Magi marvel, “*We have seen his star/come to worship him*”(Matthew 2:2). God enters the world/Emmanuel/God-with-us/baby-born-into dark world to be THE “*Light of the world*”/became one-of-us to die-for-us to destroy/conquer our/world’s darkness.

*[GN! Gospel/John states: “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it.”(John 1:5) Note: Verb/“shines.” Present tense verb/not “shone”/or “will shine.”/No: “The light shines in the darkness.”/in your/my/our darkness/your deep/darkness/darkest hours – this/His light shines. AND “The darkness has not overcome it.”]*

With these words John prepares us, even now during Advent, for what's to come/the cost of God's promise to-with-us/break into our darkness/Good Friday/death/darkness/despair. But darkness cannot hold back the dawn/overcome/extinguish light! The promised "Light" didn't come into this world to be a 'star' at Christmas/came to rise like the sun/shine(present tense) from the grave/night/to shatter the grave/to be resurrected to defeat death! Jesus came to BE the Light/radiate life/resurrection light/penetrate our darkness/to deliver us from the dominion of darkness so we may become Children of Light/God's love – the promise fulfilled in Revelation/“*There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God Almighty will give them light.*”(Revelation 22:5)

And this is what Advent is about:waiting for our salvation/release from our captivity/darkness – for the light of God's love/known in/through Jesus – the Son/sun of whom even the Psalmists sang: “*The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?/Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?*”(Ps 27:1) And this is why we anticipate Christmas/real reason for the season/God's Light came/was born for us/to-be-with-us “*to give light to those who sit in darkness/in the shadow of death/guide our feet into the way of peace.*”(Luke 1:79b) And, this is why we start Advent here/at the Table – where the full 'light' of God's promise is revealed:God's good/perfect gift of Light – a Rising Light to fill us with hope. Amen.