

Greetings from God our Father and from Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and from the Holy Spirit. Amen

The Promised Light

Isaiah 2:1–5

Advent is looking forward to celebrating the birth of Christ as an infant. It is also looking forward to Christ coming again. And Advent is Christ coming to us in our Worship service and always present in His Word and Sacraments and in His church.

Imagine walking down a long hallway in an old office building by yourself with the lights turned off. Even if you had walked that passageway in the day hundreds of times, something about doing it in the dark would make the walk eerie. Doors and alcoves become threatening, as if someone could be hiding in the shadows. Corners look dangerous, as if some threat could be lurking out of sight. It is creepy walking alone, in the dark, down a deserted hallway.

Of course, the obvious answer is to turn on the lights. Walking down that hallway in the light would make all the difference. Your step would be more confident. You could see that nothing was waiting to jump out and get

you. Your heart would beat at a peaceful pace rather than speeding up with anxiety.

Ancient Judah, when Isaiah was the prophet, was walking in dark times. The once great nation of Israel, a powerful country under King David, had split in two. Half of the country had fallen to foreign powers; the other half, Judah, was facing enemy forces that threatened to destroy them.

Inside the country, things had grown dark. Sure, the priests and people were doing the sacrifices and religious duties, but most of the people were far from God in their hearts. They did not trust the Lord, but were looking elsewhere for peace and security. They were selfish and greedy—money and possessions were far more important than looking out for the poor and needy as God had commanded. The courts could be bought, and it was easy to see most people preferred injustice when it benefited them.

Isaiah spoke harsh words to Judah. The country would soon fall under a foreign power and be ransacked because of their lack of trust in God, their disobedience to his Commandments, and their injustice to those who could not fend for themselves.

As for us as a country, the money mess is getting worse and worse. We know now just how much greed and selfishness have ransacked the United States and the rest of the world. Subprime loans, dishonest appraisals, false bond ratings, worthless insurance policies, risky investments—all done for money and more money, often preying on those who could not afford to buy what they did.

Our faith, too, seems to be attacked more and more each day. Christians in India are being killed. Hindu extremists in India are paying money, food, and alcohol to people who kill Christians and destroy their homes. Nonbelievers, atheists, and agnostics in America and Europe are organizing and advertising. Signs are going up that read “Beware of Dogma” and “Imagine No Religion” from the Freedom from Religion Foundation. They advocate no religion at all and are seeking to become more and more accepted in society as a group that wants to live without religious influence.

As we look to lack of Christ’s light in Judea of Isaiah’s time or the lack of light in our county. How about us, you and I? Do we refuse to have Christ’s light to shine into our hearts. To shine His light into the dark corner in our hearts that we do not want Jesus to shine His light into. We do not

want to confess a sin that we are hiding. Or, the dark corner of our heart that refuses to serve our neighbor as Christ commanded us to do so. Or, is the dark corner the fear of telling a neighbor about the love of God found in the cross of Christ.

Isaiah called for the people of Judah to walk in the light of the Lord. For them to do that is by looking ahead, looking to the latter days. Days will come, he says, when people will stream from all nations to worship the true God. The little hill where the temple stood in Jerusalem will become the greatest mountain of all. People will listen to the teachings of the Lord and do them. And there will be peace. Swords will become plows to provide food to eat. Weapons of war will become tools to feed the hungry. Isaiah's message is simple: walk in the promise of this light of the Lord. The latter days will come.

And they did. The promise of latter days came true; days of light arrived a little over seven hundred years after Isaiah wrote these words. Those latter days began when Jesus, the light of the world, came down from heaven above. When Jesus came and walked this earth.

“Peace on earth,” the angels sang when Jesus was born.

People streamed to listen to Jesus when He gave the Sermon on the Mount.

He told Peter to put away the sword when the mob came to arrest Him.

He went to the cross, and the world was plunged into darkness for hours. On that cross, Jesus took the greed and selfishness, the disobedience and injustice, the hatred and fighting, the jealousies, your sins and all sins. He took whatever causes the dark times in our lives, and He died for them. He was placed into that dark tomb with a stone rolled in front of it. Jesus, the light of the world, was surrounded by our darkness.

But that tomb is now empty. The darkness was shattered on Easter morning. Jesus came walking out, and the promise of Isaiah was kept. The call to walk in the light of the Lord is simply the call to walk with Jesus. The little hill on which Jerusalem stood became the greatest mountain because the salvation for all mankind was accomplished when Christ Jesus died on the cross for all mankind's sins. And was risen on the third day! The Words of God by the prophet Isaiah:

It shall come to pass in the latter days

that the mountain of the house of the Lord

shall be established as the highest of the mountains,

and shall be lifted up above the hills;

and all the nations shall flow to it,

and many peoples shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

to the house of the God of Jacob,

that He may teach us His ways

and that we may walk in His paths.”

For out of Zion shall go the law,

and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

“Mountain of the house of the Lord” is the church He established on earth.

Christ’s Church is where the Gospel is proclaimed purely and the

Sacraments are administered properly according to God’s Word.

But, of course, we are still waiting for Isaiah’s prophecy to come true in all its fullness. We are waiting for all nations to worship Jesus without

competition or persecution. We are waiting for swords to become plows, for war to become the time to feed the hungry. So When will Isaiah's prophecy be completely fulfilled?

On the Last Day. On the day Jesus returns in all glory and power. On the day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord.

So we walk in the light of Jesus. The Lord serves us and gives us His light as we come and worship Him. The Lord serves us as we come to the Lord's Table. The Lord serves us and gives us His light as we read His Word. As He calls to you come and see the light of the Lord and find peace for the depths of your soul when you hear of Jesus' glorious resurrection. Yes, come to the light of Jesus Christ, because He has called us from darkness into His light, the Lord's Light, His mercy, grace and peace and joy.

And may the peace of God, which is beyond all human comprehension, keep your hearts and minds through your faith in Christ Jesus. Amen