

Season 6 – Week 13 (January 5, 2014)
Arise, Shine

Good morning and Happy New Year – 2014! With only 5 days into it, it is shaping up to be a very memorable year with some unusually cold and harsh weather hitting much of the USA. In case you had not noticed, more than 200 new laws went into effect in Illinois as of January 1st. Now, as I spend about ½ my time in California, I am likely further behind in keeping up with the new laws here as I am amazed at what passes for laws out there but we have a few quirks of our own. I am not sure that I even saw the day coming when Marijuana (medical doses) would be legal and incandescent light bulbs would be banned. We now have the ability to carry concealed hand guns with us but we are banned from even holding our cell phones while driving (I am not sure which kills more people, hand guns or texting while driving...). We are increasing the speed limits to 70 miles per hour (which is about 5-10 miles per hour slower than what people are driving at the posted 55 mph). Then we are banning more foods in schools to reduce the number of food allergy related health issues. We will give 17 year olds the ability to vote; we will restrict drones from use in hunting; we will approve cameras on buses to catch those who try to pass them illegally; and about 190 more. As we have said before, while I do try to obey the laws, I am sure that I don't even know half of them but I am glad that I live under the Gospel and under grace which covers my sins even if it doesn't get me out of parking tickets... those I can handle.

Last week we finished up the series entitled **A Wake-up Call**. It was selected verses from Psalm 34. Those are the white papers being passed around as we will do a quick review of the last 3 verses from that series. It seems only fitting that the series after **A Wake-up Call** should be **Arise, Shine** and that is what we will look at for the next few Sundays of this New Year. It will be based on several verses using the words **Arise, shine** or both words in the verse. It is a way to get us up and moving when the cold world outside would want us frozen in our tracks. Those verses are on the cream colored papers so take one and bring it for the next few Sundays.

Our first verse last session was from **Psalm 34:9** (repeat together) **“Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.”** (NIV ©2011) **Fear** in modern day movies means ‘to frighten’ or ‘to be afraid of: expect with alarm’ (from Merriam-Webster online dictionary). In the Bible, it means ‘to have a reverential awe of’. God was (and still is) the most ‘awesome’ force in the universe. Next, it describes us as **‘you his holy people’**. We have already learned that **‘holy’** means to be ‘set apart for a purpose’. So, if we can remember that we are **‘his holy people’**, then the next part of the verse makes great sense where it says, **‘for those who fear him lack nothing’**. When God blesses us with an abundant life, it doesn't mean that you get more ‘stuff’. The truly abundant life may look very simple with family, friends, a solid faith, lots of fun, and a hope for the future. We talked about remembering the chapter **34**,

then to remember this verse number maybe we would equate to the German word for "No" (i.e. nein) as some translations state 'those who fear him have **no** lack (or **no** want)'. "**Fear the Lord, you his people, for those who fear him lack nothing**'... then try to apply that into the rest of your day and the rest of your life.

Our second verse from last week was **Psalm 34:19** (repeat together) "**The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;**" (NIV ©2011) We talked about a radio segment called Joni and Friends (by Joni Erickson Tada, who has been a quadriplegic for more than 40 years) and her reference to Job 1:8 where God asks Satan, '**have you considered my servant, Job**'. God draws attention to Job and even permits Satan to wage multiple attacks on Job and his surroundings. God allows this to both prove Job's faith and to help to make that faith even stronger. So, maybe when you see someone in a wheelchair, or dealing with another form of 'trouble' in their life, you can think of Job and his righteous faith and most importantly, think of God who delivered him and who can deliver you from your troubles OR he will just see you through them if that is his greater purpose for you.

Our last verse a week ago was from **Psalm 34:22** (repeat together) "**The Lord will rescue his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.**" (NIV ©2011) It seems to be a popular theme in TV series and movies as we all have that deep anxiety of being trapped or stranded or even abandoned with no hope and we want to have someone who can then rescue us. While those are based on fictional characters and scenarios, our situations are sometimes just as unusual and our hope is found in the God of the universe who provided our eternal rescue through Jesus Christ, his son. The second part of the verse talks about refuge and we think of those as temporary, we discussed the Biblical 'cities of refuge' where people who were accused of a crime (like murder) could go and stay without fear for their lives. In Biblical times, there were not long trials or appeal processes, as we saw in the case of Jesus. Some of these 'cities of refuge' were Hebron, Shechem in Ephraim, or Ramoth in Gilead as referenced in the books of Chronicles, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua. The big difference for us is that 'we are guilty' of every sin which we have committed and yet by claiming Jesus as our Redeemer and Savior, we will not stand condemned before God but welcomed as sons and daughters of the King and heirs to the kingdom. Will you take your refuge in his love and care... or are you still trying to find other options on your own.

Our first new verse today is from **Isaiah 60:1** (repeat together) "**Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.**" (NIV © 2011) We often hear words from Isaiah during Advent and Christmas as prophesy of the coming of Christ. I believe that this verse is applicable to us every day of our lives. I am normally a 'morning person' but on cold, snowy winter mornings or to catch an early morning flight out of O'Hare, I need to recite a few extra words of motivation and encouragement to get out of a warm bed into a chilly house not to

mention a world which has given Christ such a cold reception. The words **Arise, Shine** are action words or even command words. If any of you have served in the military, when the bugle blasted at O-dark-thirty in the morning, there was an instant response. It did not matter if it was cold, rainy, or hot, you were up, dressed and ready in no time flat waiting for your orders for the day. For some of us, waking up and having someone give us our 'orders' for the day may seem like a great idea as we are not always clear on what God is leading us to do or where we are heading for that day. We do have our 'orders', such as, 'love your neighbor as yourself' or 'give generously to the poor, not grudgingly...' (Deut. 15:10). But most days, those seem too general or too hard and we are looking for something more within our 'comfort zone'. That's the interesting part of the word **shine**...which generally means to 'reflect' as a surface which has been polished so that it sparkles when light hits it. And this is not just any light, it is 'the light of the world' Jesus. With that light comes the 'glory of the Lord' which says that it rises upon you. So, have you been polishing up on God's word so that people will see his glory in and through you? Or are you still sitting on the shelf like a prized Sterling Silver tea set waiting for that special occasion to be taken out and polished up for only occasional use? So for me, if I can get my knees to bend and my back to go straight once out of bed, then I know it is going to be a great day. So, today and each day until our last, let us **"Arise, shine, for you light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."**

The next verse for this week is **Isaiah 60:3** (repeat together) **"Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."** (NIV © 2011) What brought you here to the USA? For a very few, they can trace their ancestry back to the Pilgrims on the Mayflower or one of the other early settlements which started this country. If you have any Native American ancestry, you can say that you have always lived here and that this is truly your home country. For others of us, our German, English, French, Dutch, Scandinavian, Hispanic, African, or other ancestry came here at some point, often looking for a better, brighter future with more opportunities and more freedoms than what they left behind. For the early Pilgrims, it was a search for religious freedoms. This verse in Isaiah refers to the 'light' being Christ. And we know of the Wiseman who came following the light of the star until they found Jesus. We know of other kings and rulers who have been so drawn to the light of Christ that they have made it their national religion which may have shown how much they valued it but as we have seen, God has always made it an individual choice and not a mandate from any earthly ruler. It says that 'Nations will come to your light'. It is a voluntary act. It is them being drawn towards something which they cannot create or emulate on their own. It is a recognition that without it there is only darkness. And it concludes, 'and kings to the brightness of your dawn'. As mentioned, I am a morning person. While not always up before dawn, on mornings when it is still dark, I like to open the blinds (appropriately named) and watch for those first few rays of the sun, even before you can see it on the horizon. Those early rays are announcing that a new day is coming... get ready. Then when the sun does rise, it looks huge on the horizon

as we get a magnified view of it before it rises to its full height. If we are truly a reflection of his glory, then people should be able to get a few, just a few, glimpses of that brightness even from us. People do notice. They ask, 'What makes you so happy today.' Or, 'Someone must have received good news to be so happy'. Sometimes, my answer is to get their attention back, like, 'If I felt any better, I would have to be twins'. Other times, it is more reflective, like, 'I have been blessed already and just looking who I can share it with'. Some don't ask a follow-up question. A few do. It is then a great day. How do you start your day?? Whatever you do, make it shine!

Our final verse for today is from **Isaiah 60:19** (repeat together) **"The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."** (NIV © 2011) We have talked about the Sun and its energy which gives us both heat and light. We have talked about the moon and its only ability to reflect the sun's light as it is not a source of light itself. And what we know is that God is our everlasting light and as we see in several passages in Revelations, that in the end, there is no need for the sun or moon as the light will come from God himself as there will be no need for these created objects to provide us with a source for light. From the time I first learned about atomic energy and how splitting just one atom could generate such massive amounts of energy and then thinking that there are billions and trillions of atoms which make up an ounce or a pound of minerals. I quickly came to the conclusion that there would be a near infinite amount of energy if there were just ways to harness it, manage it, and store it. I figured that was the easy part and someone else would need to figure that out. I guess it was a bit harder than I thought back at the age of 10. The point is that if God can make a massive amount of energy out of just one atom, He can probably provide each of us with a small amount of energy needed each day to thank him, praise him, and try to reflect that light to others as we go about our daily lives. As I try to come up with some great thing that I could do for others, I am sure I often miss the dozens of ordinary, yet profoundly impactful things that I should be doing with them and for them. God only asks us to be ourselves, with his help, and that should be enough for others to see his hand working in and through us. So, next time you turn on a light switch or look for batteries or a working flashlight, remember that 'the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory'. That should brighten even the coldest and darkest days of this winter.

I hope that in the New Year you have a continuing resolution to **Take Time for God's Word**. The key phrases and words for this week are: **Arise, shine; Nations come to the light, and the Lord is your everlasting light**. Pay attention to those first few moments when waking up each day. Make those the start of an ongoing conversation with God until your eyes close again that night. Check the time. Remember verses. Keep others in your prayers. Look for new ways to be an example to others. And the usual Chicago January reminders:

Stay warm, bundle up, wear a scarf, hat and gloves, and don't shovel heavy snow.

I truly do wish each of you a Blessed New Year and I hope that each day brings new meaning to your relationship with Jesus. See you next week.

Thank you.

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Verses

Isaiah 60:1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you."

Isaiah 60:3 "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

Isaiah 60:19 "The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."

Job 25:3 "Can his forces be numbered? On whom does his light not rise?"

Job 11:17 "Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning."

Daniel 12:3 "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."

Matthew 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Psalms 31:16 "Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love."

Numbers 6:25 "The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;"

Full Text from **Numbers 6:24**) The LORD bless you, and keep you; **25**)The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; **26**)The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'... (NIV © 2011)