

Season 6 – Week 14 (January 12, 2014)
Arise, Shine

Good morning. Welcome to the ongoing season of winter. For many years, we forgot just what the season was about. This is what I recall of winter as a kid. Lots of snow; some really cold days; and spring took forever to arrive. Now as an adult, winter is remembered as too much salt on the roads (and on the cars); too high of heat bills; and spring still takes a long time to come BUT April 15th always arrives too soon (tax day)!

Last time we started the series entitled **Arise, Shine** and that is what we will continue to look at for the next few Sundays. It is based on several verses using the words **Arise, shine** or similar words in the verse. It is a way to get us up and moving when the world would rather see us frozen in our tracks. These 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 **Isaiah 60:1** (repeat together) **"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you."** (NIV © 2011) When we hear these words from Isaiah we think of Advent and Christmas as prophesy for the coming of Christ. I believe that this verse is applicable to us every day of our lives. The words **Arise, Shine** are action words or even command words. 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). The interesting part is 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, 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."**

Our second verse from last time was **Isaiah 60:3** (repeat together) **"Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."** (NIV © 2011) We talked about our ancestry or family history in coming to this country. 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 have read about other kings and rulers who have been so drawn to the light of Christ that they have made it their national religion. 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 a recognition that without it there is only darkness. And it concludes, **'and kings to the brightness of your dawn'**. We know that before dawn, 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. Whatever you do, make it shine!

Our last verse from 2 weeks ago was 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 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. We discussed that God can make a massive amount of energy from splitting just one atom, He can 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. 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 for 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 winter.

Our first new verse today is from **Job 25:3** (repeat together) **“Can his forces be numbered? On whom does his light not rise?”** (NIV © 2011) To get some context for this verse, we must realize that the prior chapter is Job lamenting that God does not take prompt action against the wicked while letting the good or righteous suffer. His so-called friend Bildad then speaks in this chapter to place God to in the heights of heaven and places unreachable by man. He even gets to the point of calling man but a worm in God's eyes. Clearly this does NOT cheer up poor Job. The verse fits here for its two great questions... ones worth asking ourselves each morning. The first, **“Can his forces be numbered?”** is a great reminder that even if it were just you and God against the world, you would be on the winning side. We truly forget the great armies of angels and fellow Christians who stand with us directly and in prayer each and every day. We too often think that we need to do our ‘stand for Jesus’ alone and feeling surrounded. While Bildad did actually have some insights about God, he treated God as someone too high or too far off to be concerned about us, mere humans. He obviously did not know God in a personal way, the way which Job did but still Job felt attacked by evil (which he was) and left alone by God (which he was NOT). The second part of the verse, **“On whom does his light not rise?”** reminds us that God is not a ‘local’ God. He is not just here in Roselle or just Illinois or even just the USA. God is the God of the whole world and even the whole universe. We kid ourselves and truly limit our faith when we try to put boundaries around God and his Love. When I wake up, the first thing I do upon arising is to stretch. I am amazed that my arms must be getting shorter or my legs longer as it is getting more difficult to bend down and touch my toes each day. When I stretch

my arms out wide, I am amazed at the reach (as your extended reach is about the same as your height). As I stretch, more things become possible for me to reach or touch which may not have been the case if I just stayed in that hunched over position which I somehow ended up in during sleep. God is asking us to keep stretching and to keep reaching every day of our lives. We are not alone... we have countless forces to support us and wherever we go, his light will surely follow us.

The next verse for this week is **Job 11:17** (repeat together) **“Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning.”** (NIV © 2011) The context for this verse is another ‘friend’, Zophar, who is rebuking Job and claiming that he is still holding on to some evil or wickedness that he must repent of before he can find favor with God. This verse describes what life will be like when he is again free from sin and what Zophar believes must have been great wickedness before God. With friends like these, Job doesn’t need enemies. They just cannot believe that such pain and trials and hardships are not a direct punishment for what Job must have done. His only ‘crime’ was being faithful and just and this is but a test of that faithfulness and a proof to Satan that Job’s faith was not based on his riches or good fortune but on his absolute trust in God. These words are part of the **‘Arise, Shine’** theme because while Zophar was wrong about Job, he was right about the place where we sinners stand in repentance. The old is gone. The new is come. I like the reference to **“Life will be brighter than noonday.”** We have talked before about how there is little or no shadows (or shadows of doubt) around you when the sun is directly overhead. Everything around you is bright and well lit. Things are easier to see even if we need to squint sometimes because it is just too bright. We have also talked about those first few moments each day when just before sunrise, the darkness begins to fade away as the rays of light begin to light the sky first and then the earth as the sun rise peeks over the horizon. I am sure that some of us have felt the darkness around us, maybe in the past, or maybe even today. We are still waiting for the light to brighten our paths. That is what this describes and why it is important if we are to **Arise, Shine**. We need to be in his light to reflect that light to others. So, how about you?? Are you up-and-at-em or are you still hiding under the covers trying to still sleep through life?? When you arise, think of Job and all of his problems... I am sure that yours will pale in comparison and that you can start your day with thanks to God for his countless blessings and for being there with you through any test of faith which may come your way.

Our final verse for today is from **Daniel 12:3**. It is another of those 1-2-3 type verses which may help remember it. (repeat together) **“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.”** (NIV © 2011) We often think of the Book of Daniel as only about how certain Jews were treated in captivity. We think of great faith as in the stories of Daniel in the Lion’s Den and the 3 young men thrown into the fiery furnace. We often forget that Daniel also contains

prophecy about coming changes in power and kingdoms rising and falling. It further talks about the end times and the point of the resurrection. This verse is declaring that in the resurrection, it will be easy to see and to tell apart those who are wise and those who have helped to lead others to righteousness. We have talked before about stars and their ranges of brightness and size differences. Yet, they are still stars. And as the verse states, **“Those who are wise and righteous will shine for ever and ever”**... much beyond the life spans of current stars in the universe which may be thousands or millions of years old. As we saw in Job and as we see in Daniel, here are people under great oppression or circumstances who still manage to not only just keep their faith but continue to grow in their faith because of adversity. Such actions draw attention from many others. For Daniel, others in the King's court wanted Daniel dead because he was faithful only to God but their plans backfired and they became the lunch of lions as a result. For Job, we watched how everyone only saw the circumstances and not the faithfulness. Yet, he persisted in his faith. Even in our day, economic times seem to be getting better, at least for many and that is the time to be on guard the most so that we do not become complacent in our circumstances and dependent on what the world can provide for us. We need to remain steadfast in our faith and faithful in our walk with God. We need to be seen as wise. Now, I have been known to be a wise-guy from time-to-time but I am not sure that I would be considered wise at this point. We need to let our insight come from our outlook and that outlook can only come from our dependence on God's promises through Christ. I like aspirational sayings and verses. This verse is one for me. It is likely beyond my grasp but if I keep stretching each morning as I **Arise, shine**, then maybe it will be within my reach just to touch the edges of eternity. **“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.”**

I hope and pray that in this New Year you are continuing to **Take Time for God's Word**. The key phrases and words for this week are: **Can his forces be numbered; Life will be brighter than noonday; and the wise will shine**. Make the most of those first few moments when waking up each day. Start of an ongoing conversation with God to share your concerns and to see His guidance. Remember verses throughout the day. People often say that older people often repeat themselves. I am giving you permission to do so often as you repeat these verses of God's promise and care. Who knows, they just might sink in to others too if they hear them often enough.

I hope your New Year has started well and that you are on your way to a most exciting year. We will continue to **Arise, Shine** 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)