

Season 6 – Week 15 (January 12, 2014)
Arise, Shine

Good morning. In the past, we always thought that you would need to head to Florida or Arizona to avoid the cold and snow of winter in Chicago. Based on the forecast for the next few days, we could head to Anchorage, Alaska and still have it 40 to 50 degrees warmer than it is in Chicago. If this is global warming, then somehow we are heading in the wrong direction in temperatures. While kids are excited that many schools have already canceled school on Monday, they are forgetting that when May (or June) come and they are still in class, that is the real effect of having 'snow days' or 'too cold days' (or whatever we are calling these events). I am not sure if businesses will also consider letting workers stay home but I know for many, if the kids are home, someone else needs to be there too. I have to tell you that most Mondays, I do not look forward to getting on a plane and heading to San Francisco BUT this will be an exception. It will be about 60-70 degrees warmer than here even if it is only for a few days. But I promise that I will be thinking of you the whole time and I will send you my warmest wishes.

We are in the third week of the series entitled **Arise, Shine** and we will continue to look at briefly next Sunday when we will begin a new series. Our series is based on several verses using the words **Arise, shine** or similar words in the verse. These verses are on the cream colored papers so take one and bring it next Sunday as well.

Our first verse last session was from **Job 25:3** (repeat together) **“Can his forces be numbered? On whom does his light not rise?”** (NIV © 2011) His so-called friend Bildad speaks in this chapter of the place of God in the heights of heaven where he is unreachable by man. Clearly he does NOT cheer up poor Job. The verse has two great questions. 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. Job felt attacked by evil (which he was) and left alone by God (which he was NOT). The second question, **“On whom does his light not rise?”** reminds us that God is the God of the whole universe. We kid ourselves and truly limit our faith when we try to put boundaries around God and his Love. We talked about stretching in the mornings so that more things become possible for us to reach or touch which may not have been the case earlier. God is asking us to keep stretching and to keep reaching every day of our lives. We need to remember that we have countless forces to support us and wherever we go, his light will surely follow us.

Our second verse last week was from **Job 11:17** (repeat together) **“Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning.”** (NIV © 2011) This verse is from Zophar who is rebuking Job for holding on to some evil or wickedness must be repented to find favor with God. Zophar cannot believe that such pain and hardships are not a direct punishment for what Job must have

done. Job was put to a test of faithfulness and a proof to Satan that his faith was not based on riches or good fortune but on an absolute trust in God. I like the reference to **“Life will be brighter than noonday.”** When the sun is directly overhead there are few shadows; everything around you is bright and well lit. Things are easier to see even if it is sometimes too bright. That is what this describes and why it is important if we are to **Arise, Shine**. I am sure that your problems will pale in comparison to Jobs so you can start your day with thanks to God for countless blessings and for being there with you through any test of faith which may come.

Our last verse a week ago was from **Daniel 12:3**. (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) 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. 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. As we see in Daniel, people are under great oppression but still manage to continue to grow in their faith because of adversity. Last week, I talked about economic times seeming to be get better, but with a 3% loss in the stock market this week, maybe I spoke too soon. Regardless of the ups or downs, we need to remain steadfast in our faith and faithful in our walk with God. We need to be seen as wise. We need to let our insight come from our outlook and our outlook based on our dependence on God's promises through Christ. This verse 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. How far are you stretching your faith today?

Our first verse for today is from **Matthew 5:16** (repeat together) **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”** (NIV © 2011) Here is another 5:16 verse as we have seen a couple of times in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 – 18...**“Rejoice Always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”** (NIV © 2011) So, maybe as you are leaving work or on your way home or maybe even as you are sitting down for dinner at that time, think about this verse. Think about how you did today to live up to the message of this verse. At confirmation time each year, I hear this verse given as the ‘life verse’ to one of the confirmands and I wonder what challenges and trials they will see in their lifetime and whether or not they will be persecuted for letting the light of Christ shine through them. As I read the updates from the **Bible League** or the **American Bible Society**, both focused on getting God's Word into the hands of millions of people around the world, they provide account after account of individuals and families who have needed to hide their worship and faith only because of the direct and deadly persecution which they face in their countries. Having a Bible in their own language is a great treasure and they

gladly then share it with others who do not yet have one. We often have 2 or 3 or 5 or more Bibles in our homes and yet we scarcely find the time to open even one of them let alone share them with others who may have none. In this verse, like the children's song, **This Little Light of Mine**, it talks about the ways and places that we can let our lights shine. And it is not to shine on us or our great deeds, it is to shine on what God can do 'even through us'. That is the amazing part. When people see the generosity of Trinity through soup kitchens or food pantries OR when we are represented by our young people helping out the less fortunate in Appalachia or Mexico or Montana or wherever they are going next, it is about showing God's love in action through simple acts of generosity or time or talents. Yet, as we know, it is the simple things which can have the most profound impact on our lives and the lives of others. So, when 5:16 rolls around (am or pm... whichever you want), you can **'Rejoice Always'** or **'let your light so shine before others'** and I am sure that God will be pleased with either of your responses to these great verses.

The next verse for this week is **Psalm 31:16** (repeat together) **"Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love."** (NIV © 2011) This is an expression that we often hear from David who had many a dark moment or even period in his life where he felt cut off from God or at least that God was distant from him. We know that it really was not God who had moved but that David would often get caught up in his own world of fame, glory, power, destitution, desolation, etc. Then he would again be reminded of how close he once was to God as a shepherd boy when it was just he and God against the wilds of the world in protecting those sheep. We have seen in accounts of Moses coming down from the mountain that his face shone brightly as a reflection of just being in the presence of God, even if he did not see his face directly. We also saw in the New Testament at the Transfiguration that Jesus shone brightly from being in the presence of God the Father and that it was blinding to the disciples who were with him. I like that we are referred to as **'servants'**. That is not a put-down as Christ said of himself that he came to serve and not be served. It is like when you go to a friend's house for a dinner party. Do you quickly find a chair close to the TV remote or the hors d'oeuvres, or do you go in the kitchen and ask, 'what can I do to help?' If their parties are anything like ours, there is ALWAYS something more to do and extra hands are always appreciated. So, how are you doing as a servant??? Maybe we all need to brush up a bit on that skill set and set aside a bit of pride in the process. We are always drawn to stories and accounts of someone who is hopelessly trapped and then there are desperate and even heroic attempts to save them. We had a recent story of a massive winter pile-up on an interstate in northern Indiana where more than 40 vehicles including 14 semi-trailer trucks were involved. One car was crushed between a semi and another vehicle and the driver was helplessly pinned inside for hours while firemen and rescue workers gently and patiently peeled back layer after layer of metal to finally release him and get him to a hospital. As I fly every week, I am comforted to know that most critical systems within the aircraft have one or even two backup systems which can be used in the event of a primary

failure. That does not guarantee safety but it at least provides a measure of recovery if some things go wrong. In our verse, it says **'save me in your unfailing love'**. There is no need for a backup or an alternative or a rescue crew... God's love NEVER fails. That is a promise which he has made and kept from the time of Adam to Abraham to David to Mary to Peter to Paul and yes, even to us. It is that firm foundation upon which we base our faith and our hope. Again, it is a short verse with a powerful promise to recall whenever you may have doubts or just to cheer you on your way each day. **"Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love."**

Our final verse for today and this series is from **Numbers 6:25** (repeat together) **"The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;"** (NIV © 2011) I know what most of you are thinking, somehow, something is missing. And you are right. This verse is in the middle of what is often referred to as Aaron's Blessing and which we generally refer to as the Benediction. When I found the verse, I was surprised to see that it was from the Book of Numbers. I have to admit that I don't spend a lot of time looking for memory verses in the Book of Numbers. I have just not found that many but this group of verses is easy for us to remember because we have likely heard it hundreds or even thousands of times in our lives. So, now you know where to find it. It starts in verse 24 and I think we can all say it even without the words in front of us, (repeat together) 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) This again is a great set of verses to remember at 6:25 am or pm... whether a part of your breakfast or your evening dinner. You don't need to wait for Sunday morning at the end of a service to hear these words. It is a blessing which you should know and feel every day of your life. I will often end notes or emails to family members with just the short phrase, 'Bless You!' You are allowed to say it even if someone did not sneeze. It is a reminder to them and to me that they are in my prayers and that I ask God's blessings upon them often even though God does not need to be reminded... I do... and they do. And then there are those final 4 words. Words which state the unspoken desire of every people and nation on the planet... **'And give you peace'**. As we have said before, that peace is not just the absence of war, which would be terrific by itself. It is a harmony and gentleness within and across relationships at all levels. It is not accomplished in isolation but in conjunction with other attributes which make it possible. It is one of the 'fruits of the spirit'. It was the word Jesus used when addressing the disciples when he entered the locked room after his resurrection. It is what we need to strive for but to realize that perfect peace is found only in Him. So, when you see the clock, you will see Numbers; and when you think of Numbers, think of 6:24-26. Having these words in your heart and mind will be a great step towards gaining that peace, at least within your own soul. Try it.

So, with January coming to an end, how are you doing at continuing to **Take Time for God's Word** each day? The key phrases and words for this week are:

Let you light so shine; save me in your unfailing love; and And give you peace. These are great at the beginning of your day or near the end (or anytime in between). They are short so maybe you want to say them a couple of times when they do come to mind and really think about the words. This is not a memory contest and the only prize is what you gain from thinking about them and reflecting on God's great love for you... which is priceless. Look for people who need help in this bitterly cold weather. Then keep looking for them even when the weather warms up as this is a cold world for those who do not know Christ. So, continue to **Arise, Shine** until we meet again next week.

Thank you.

[end]

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)