

# The Light of Glory / Advent Carol Service

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Date: 27 November 2016

Preacher: Rev. Jeremy Graham

[ 0 : 00 ]      Heavenly Father, we ask that now you would shine the light of your Holy Spirit into our hearts, so that you might reach deep into our lives. In this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jeremy, and I'm one of the ministers on staff here at St. John's. And especially if you're visiting with us, it's my pleasure to welcome you to St. John's. And on behalf of the congregation, also to thank you, the choir, for your beautiful singing today.

Thank you very much. I was particularly touched by the Sergei Illuminare, that piece that Owen wrote from Isaiah 60.

And that's the text that I'd like us to look at today, Isaiah 60. And you'll find that in your pew Bibles on page 619. And Isaiah 60 is the perfect text for us as we begin this Advent season.

Because you may know the word Advent simply means coming. But in fact, Advent is actually a very complicated season. Because it's not just about waiting for Christmas.

[ 1 : 14 ]      Now, Advent is a time when we're invited to hold attention between three bold truths. First, Christ has come.

And then Christ is coming. And thirdly, Christ will come again. Christ has come. Christ is coming. Christ will come again.

Those are the three bold truths of Advent. And so, first Advent is a month of remembering. Remembering the promises of God in the Old Testament and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Christ has come. But second, it's also a season of repentance. A time of reflection and searching. Where we invite the purifying light of the gospel to search into the darkest recesses of our hearts and cleanse us.

And so, Christ is coming. But finally, it's a time of longing as well. Longing for the King's return. Waiting with expectancy for the time one day when the Lord Jesus will return in power and glory to judge the world.

[ 2 : 28 ]      And make all things new. It's the season for praying together. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Christ is coming again. How can one short season hold all this together?

Well, another way of asking that question is, how can just one chapter of scripture hold all this together? Because that's exactly what Isaiah 60 does. So, let's have a closer look.

Beginning with, Christ has come. If you look with me at verse 1. Arise, get up, shine, for your light has come. The glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

Isaiah is speaking here of the coming of the promised Messiah or the King, Jesus Christ. He describes him as a light shining in the darkness. You know, I find the end of Vancouver to be a very difficult time to live in Vancouver.

The end of November, excuse me. To be a very difficult time to live. Yeah. That's probably true as well. You know, as we were in the quiet moments of the service, you can hear the rain on the roof.

- [ 3 : 41 ] It's beating that hard. I'm told that it's rained something like 40 of the last 31 days. And there's almost no sunlight. And it feels like the clouds are so low that they're just kind of closing right in on my head.
- So I don't need to convince you that darkness is an unpleasant image. So when we read verse 2, if you see it there with me. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the people.
- It's an image that speaks to us. Because all through Isaiah, all through this book, Isaiah uses images of darkness and blindness to describe our physical and spiritual condition in a broken world apart from God.
- Fist fights in the mall on Black Friday. And post-election racial tensions. Financial uncertainty in the markets. And I'm told that 65 million people are displaced from their homes today.
- About one in every 122 people in the whole world. Darkness is the perfect description for this murky portrait that we see when we look around us. But, but, verse 2 doesn't end there.
- [ 4 : 50 ] The second half of verse 2. But, the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you. Christ has come. Into this darkness which overwhelms comes the one whom St. John calls the true light which gives light to everyone.
- And he comes as a man. Yet with the same power that he had when he first spoke the world into existence. Saying, let there be light. And he acts with that power through his death and resurrection to open the door.
- So that we might turn from darkness to light. And receive the forgiveness of sins. Be filled with the glory of God in the fulfillment of all that Isaiah speaks of here in verse 1 to 3. And so Christ has come.
- But it doesn't end there. Because Christ is also coming. Look with me at verse 3. Verse 3. And the nations shall come to your light.
- Kings to the brightness of your rising. Because at Advent we're not merely commemorating a wonderful historical event. Isaiah gives us a beautiful vision of people from all over the world.
- [ 6 : 00 ] Drawn to the light of Jesus in order to worship him and join God's people in praise. And there's more. You'll find it if you flip the page in verse 11.
- About halfway down the first column. Verse 11. Because the gates of Jerusalem shall be open continually. Day and night they shall not be shut. That's because there's a steady stream of people pouring in to see the king.
- You see the central joy of the Christian faith. Is that what happened when Christ came as a baby boy. Did not end when he rose again and returned to his father. No. It continues fresh and new each generation all the way down until today.
- That's why we can say this Advent. Christ is coming in the present tense. Because he's new every morning. Maybe you've heard this story.
- When the 17th century French scientist Blaise Pascal. When he died. His servant found a small piece of parchment sewn inside breast of his coat.
- [ 7 : 07 ] And at the top of the paper Pascal had drawn a cross. And underneath the cross this is what he wrote. In the year of the Lord 1654. Monday November 23rd.
- From about half past 10 in the evening until half past 12. Fire. The God of Abraham. God of Isaac. God of Jacob. Not of philosophers nor of the scholars.
- Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace. God of Jesus Christ. My God and thy God. Thy God shall be my God.

And if you know Jesus. You can testify. To the words. The truth. Of Pascal's testimony. In your own life. And so can countless more people around the world.

Who meet Jesus each day. So that in the words of St. Paul. God who first said let light shine out of darkness. He has shone that very same light in the hearts of you and I.

[ 8 : 11 ] Giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Christ is coming. And finally Christ will come again. And this is the part of Advent.

That I think is the most underappreciated. And most in need of reclaiming. And from verse 15. In the bottom of the first column there.

All the way to the end of the chapter. Isaiah's vision now looks forward. To the final day when God the great redeemer will finally bring his people to a perfect end.

So look with me. At verse 18. Verse 18. Violence shall no more be heard in your land. Devastation or destruction within your borders.

You shall call your walls salvation and your gates praise. Wasn't the trumpet beautiful at that point? And then the second half of verse 19. The Lord.

[ 9 : 09 ] Will be your everlasting light and your God will be your glory. When Jesus comes back. He will return in a very different way. Than the first time he came.

In the Christmas story. He will return as Lord and judge. And no one will miss it or overlook the date. And by the very same power that he used to say let there be light.

And the same power that he displayed when he conquered sin and death on the cross. He will act with perfect justice to end all suffering and evil. It's a day of joy and peace for those who belong to Jesus.

But it's a day of judgment and sorrow. For those who have rejected him. And I think that deep down. You and I. We long to see this kind of justice in our world.

I've been fascinated this weekend by the backlash. Against Prime Minister Trudeau. And his eulogy over the death of Fidel Castro. And we see in that backlash. This moral outrage that people have.

[ 10 : 10 ] Whether they want to call it that or not. That there's a fundamental belief that there is good and evil in the world. There is light and darkness. And we're not satisfied when we see the darkness whitewashed.

And eulogized away. We long for true justice and judgment. Whether we use those words or not. And so as we close. This Advent season is an invitation for you and me.

To rest in the good news of what God has done for us. What he is doing for us. What he will do for us. Through his son Jesus Christ. Because Christ has come.

And Christ is coming. And Christ will come again. Amen.