

Epiphany

6 January 2013

Today we are reminded of some beautiful words that God spoke through the prophet Isaiah:

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the land, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

These are beautiful words - beautiful promises.

They are also a wonderful reminder of what Epiphany is all about - communicating God's saving grace to all the world. Or, rather, to be more specific, Epiphany is the *recognition by the nations* that Jesus is the son of God. This is the day we remember the magi bringing their gifts to the baby Jesus.

But what this day *signifies* is the nations of the world coming to realize what God's plan for the world really is.

Now, with all the focus on the magi and their gifts for baby Jesus, it might be really easy for us to forget that *we* have an important role to play in all this.

You see, the shining light that drew the attention of the magi was the star that shone over Jesus.

But, the light that Isaiah was talking about was the renewed Israel. After their exile in Babylon had come to an end - as their punishment for violating their covenant with God came to an end - Israel was allowed to go home. The nation of Israel was allowed to return, after their long punishment, just so they might renew the covenant of justice they shared with God. Our psalm reading

mentions just some of the rules of justice that God demands from God's people.

But, if we look to the Isaiah passages that come before today's readings, we see even more clearly what God's justice is.

We see even more clearly what it takes to become that bright shining light that will attract the nations of the world.

These past couple months we've had some terrible reminders that darkness has covered so much of the world, that thick darkness does indeed cover so many people.

Now, more than ever, we have to be the light shining in the darkness. We are the body of Christ in the world today - *we are* - individually and as a congregation.

Now, I had the good fortune of going to the Methodist Epiphany service in Greene on Friday night. As part of her Epiphany reflection, Pastor Amy shared a wonderful reflection entitled - "Christmas Creed from Latin America".

As I was listening to it, and as I've been reading a copy of it, it seems to me to be more a recipe than a creed - more a way of creating something wonderful, than merely stating what we might or might not really believe.

It seems to me to be a wonderful meditation for each of us to remind ourselves of just what we are supposed to be.

And so, since we have so many wonderful cooks here - I'd like to offer you this recipe for becoming God's light in the world. Each verse has a different ingredient.

Now, I know you may not have all the ingredients you need right

now. So, like any good recipe, I ask you to take a copy, put it someplace in your home where you can see it regularly - on the refrigerator maybe. Look at it often, bring together all the ingredients.

Make sure you have them all together. But please take note - these are dangerous ingredients. Individually they can cause great harm. They must all be brought together for the recipe to work.

Then mix them together in your heart and mind. Let them bake in the warm knowledge of God's love for you and then share the goodness with the world all around us.

A recipe for becoming God's light (or as found on the internet "Christmas Creed from Latin America"):

**Christmas Creed from Latin America (*Author anonymous*)
- or Recipe for Becoming God's Light**

I believe in Jesus Christ
and in the power of the gospel, which began in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a small village,
of whose coming the shepherds saw the sign,
and for whom there was no room at the inn.

I believe in the one whose life changed the course of history,
for whom the kings of the earth had no power,
and who was not understood by the proud.

I believe in the one to whom the poor, the oppressed, the discouraged,
the afflicted, the sick, the blind, the leprous gave welcome,
and accepted as Lord and Savior.

I believe in the one who with love changed the hearts of the proud
and with his life showed that it is more important to serve than to be served
and that the greatest joy is giving your life for others.

I believe in peace, which is not the absence of war,
but justice among all peoples and nations
and love among all.

I believe in reconciliation, forgiveness,
and the transforming power of the gospel.

I believe that Christmas is strength and power,
and that this world can change
if with humility and faith we kneel before the manger.

I believe that I must be the first one to do so.