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Apostles Anglican Church

20 December 2023

Fr. Rob Goebel

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, kindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Main Text: Isaiah 61

Supporting Text: Luke 19:29-48

Title: A New and Glorious Morn

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, you gave your Apostles grace truly to believe and to preach your word: Grant that we might love what they believed and preach what they taught through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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Intro

On Christmas Eve, we sang O Holy Night together. Since then, its words have been running through my head. I've heard that if you have a song stuck in your head, you should listen to it all the way through, and it will get unstuck. Well, I listened to a bunch of different renditions, and still, the words continue to resonate in my head. When this happens, especially with sacred songs, I like to pause and ask myself if maybe God has some divine intention in this repetition. Listen to these wonderful words that so succinctly capture what happened on that first Christmas night so many years ago:

"O holy night, the stars are brightly shining; It is the night of the dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He appeared and the

soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!"

As the people of the world, we have been held captive under the gloom of darkness from the beginning of our existence. In the first chapter of Genesis, in the second verse, we learn that the world was shrouded in darkness even as God began to shape our world and us into being.

After the fall, Adam and Eve ran to the only darkness they could find, the shadows of the trees of the garden.

Since that time, we have been running to the darkness in an attempt to hide the darkness within us, to hide our ugliness, to hide ourselves from God and one another so that God and others won't see us and be disappointed by who we are.

But the darkness is a poor place to hide. Within its cover, it takes advantage and enslaves us.

Point One: Poured Out Upon Us

However . . .

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . In him was life, and the life was the **light of men**. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

In the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, God shattered the darkness of this world with his light. The same light that was in the beginning with him at the time of creation, the light that moved over the darkness, consuming it and bringing forth life. At the incarnation, this light, being latent in creation, burst forth from creation, consuming the darkness once again and giving life to the world.

This is what happened in Bethlehem all those years ago, and this is the glorious hope we celebrate at Christmas.

In Luke chapter 4, Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61 (our OT reading for today). Jesus says, in essence, this is what my birth means; this he says has been fulfilled in me. Listen to what Isaiah says:

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;*

Are you poor? Rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,

Are you hurting because of a broken relationship? Rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

*to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

Does your heart break for the many held captive by profiteers and evil men? Maybe you're held captive by guilt or some foible you have never been able to get free from. Rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

*to comfort all who mourn;
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;*

Are you mourning over the illness or loss of a loved one? Rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

Yes, there are still wars around the world. There's pain, suffering and mourning. There's death, destruction, and tragedies. But the morning is breaking. If you've ever experienced the sunrise in the mountains or at the beach, you know you want to get your cup of coffee or tea and get outside just before daybreak while it's still dark out. As you sit staring at the darkness you began to see the sun slowly making its way over the horizon. It's not quite light

yet but it's not fully dark yet either. This is where we find ourselves. We live in the already but not yet. Truly, Christ has been born; he has died, he is risen, and he will come again. But the full implications of the birth of he who is the Light of Man have not been revealed yet.

Like a sunrise we can bask in the beauty of the new day. However, this in between place of not quite day and not quite night can be a difficult place to be. Like watching the daybreak, we might be groggy from our sleeping, there's may still a chill in the air from the night. At times it may seem like there is no light on the horizon.

So, God has placed on us a seal and given us his Holy Spirit as a guarantee. The new light of His Word made flesh that invaded the darkness on that first Christmas has been poured into our hearts.

In times of sadness, desolation and darkness we can hold on to the reality that a new and glorious morn has already dawned in and upon us and one day we will dance in the glory of the brightness of the Son.

Transition: And we should keep busy as we wait. Those of us who have believed in his name have become the torchbearers of the light of Christ. When this happens, his light burns within us.

Point Two: Burning Within Us. (750)

When we live as a people bearing with the Light of Christ, we can not help but set the world ablaze with the fire of his love. We become moved with compassion for those who are lost in the darkness as we once were. We can do nothing other than to join Christ in his mission and declare:

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,*

*and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;*

This isn't some evangelistic formula, it's the natural outcome of His light burning within us.

We can not help but to proclaim, *Rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!*

Christianity happens when we become like the incarnate Word of God so filled with the light of God that we burst forth out of the darkness and declare the glorious light of Christ to a world lost in the darkness of sin and error.

Look at Isaiah after he declared God's salvation. He can't help holding his joy in. Isaiah chapters 61 and 62 says:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God . . . For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch . . . and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give . . . You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight.

So great is the burning of Christ's light within us that it can't help but break through us and shine its light on a broken and dying world.

This is what happened all those years ago in Bethlehem. God's Word, the Light of man, burst forth from his creation, shattering the darkness of this world and pouring his light upon so that his light might burn within us and we might declare a new and glorious morn to the world.

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, kindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**