Isaiah 60:1-2 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

 I want to start by drawing your attention to a particular phrase in this section. That phrase is **the glory of the Lord.** Let’s take a moment and pay attention to what that says here. The light that is coming is, when you follow the Hebrew, the glory of the Lord. And then notice something at the end. The passage says, **“The Lord rises upon you”** and immediately following that **“and his glory appears over you.”** In other words, the glory is the Lord!

 If you would just think of what you know about the glory of the Lord. The first appearance of this glory is recorded when Moses is before the burning bush. You will recall Moses’ great fear at this sight and yet you will also recall the great grace and mercy that God brought to Moses through this sight. After that there are about 27 other references to **“the Glory of the Lord”** found in Scripture. The greatest and longest lasting was the Pillar of fire and pillar of cloud that lead the Israelites in their opening Exodus journey. God’s visible presence went before them and guided them to where they should go.

 One of the last appearances of this glory would be the night of the birth of Jesus. When that angel first appeared before the shepherds to announce the birth of the Savior the passage also says, **“The glory of the Lord shone around them.”** Recall the impact of that glory shining on the shepherds. They were terrified! Yet the wonder of this is that these shepherds were the first to go and see the Savior, that little baby lying in a manger and to grasp that this baby was the Son of God sent for us. Truly something awesome seems to always surround the “glory of the Lord.”

 Do you know the last appearance? It happens again around Jesus. The interesting thing is that it is not particularly identified with the phrase “the glory of the Lord” because if you grasp the whole and wonder of this revelation of Scripture it doesn’t need to be identified for what it is. And by the way, the Epiphany season always ends with this reference and reading, which again should tell you something. Got it yet? It is the transfiguration of Jesus! Jesus physically displays that He is the glory of the Lord!

 Why do I tell you all of this? Because it has tremendous bearing on our text. To grasp and understand this **“Light,”** this “**glory of the Lord**” is so important to understanding the words of our text and the hope that these words bring to all. Our theme will be: **THE GLORY OF THE LORD. 1st. The Glory promised. 2nd. Why the Glory comes. 3rd. The Awesomeness of the Glory.**

 I guess the first thing to grasp here is that we are dealing with a prophecy of the book of Isaiah which would have been uttered and made some 700 years before the Christ came. This prophecy is really about the Christ and it is given for a reason. Isaiah has had the daunting task of pointing out to the people of Judah their sin, really their rejection of the Lord God and his truth. My sermon study book on this verse gives this very apt description of the times: *“Outwardly the nation seemed strong and wealthy. But the prophet saw signs of grave danger. The strong and wealthy were using their power to harass the poor. Men went around drunk; women cared more about their clothes than about their neighbors’ hunger. People gave lip service to God and kept up the outward appearance of religion but did little more. They had lost the essence of true religion by abandoning the Lord’s promises of grace, forgiveness, and life.” (Sermon Studies on the Old Testament C. page 60.)*

 Because of this unbelief, this rejection of the Lord and his truth, Isaiah was moved by the Lord to let the people know that some rather harsh, terrible times were coming upon them. In the midst of speaking of these terrible times, Isaiah is also moved to tell the people about a time of hope and wonder, joy and marvel. Isaiah prophetically looks ahead to the time when the Glory of the Lord appears among the people. But more than that, Isaiah vision and prophecy lets them marvel at what the Glory of the Lord will bring. Listen to what verses 3-5 say, **“Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ‘Lift up your eyes and look about you; All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth of the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.”**

 I think just in reading those words you can catch the spirit of excitement, wonder and awe found in what is going on. What those words are describing is the end result of the Glory of the Lord coming to the world. All we need to do is realize that these words are describing the eternal kingdom of the Lord that will come when Jesus comes again. These words are speaking of the wonder and marvel, the absolute fantastic nature of God’s eternal kingdom. What is said here fits perfectly with what is said in Revelation about God’s eternal kingdom. A kingdom for every nation, for high rank and low. A kingdom where the wealth and wonders of the world are found, and everyone will dwell in the open presence of the Lord God. Yep, if you are going to tell your people bad news, temper it with future great news and hope.

 So why does this “Glory of the Lord” have to come? That reason is found in verse 2, **“See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples.”** To understand what is said here just grasp how God’s Word uses the terms “light” and “dark.” Light is of and from God. Light exists and is and is a force for good and revelation in the world. Dark is of and from evil and the devil. Dark is best described as “the total absence of light.” In the case of our passage, the use of the word and the context tell us that darkness refers to all the bad and evil things that are a part of our lives because sin was brought into the world. In other words, our words are speaking of the horror, the terrible nature and troubles that are found in our world because of sin.

 In the term “darkness” is found all the problems and troubles of life. Darkness is sickness, disease, distress and depression. Darkness is murders, thefts, immoralities, and death. You name it, whatever is found in this world that causes distress, turmoil, hurt and harm you can bet it is a part of the darkness that is found. And note how God describes this darkness. It is thick darkness. Yes, it is often an overwhelming, burdensome and crushing darkness. There is nothing nice or good about this darkness. And one more thing that we should be sure to see. Did you notice that when the light comes it rises above, shines over this darkness? You should see that. It is God’s way of telling us that even when the Light comes that is not necessarily the end to darkness. The Light can pierce the darkness, dispel the darkness and even by its very brightness reveal the darkness, but until the Glory comes permanently, the darkness is still going to be found in this world.

 What does this mean? You can stay in the darkness or you can follow the Light. And please remember that by nature you are blind, you can see no light. But God will open your eyes and when the Light of God is found, don’t dismiss it, don’t ignore it, and don’t run away from it. Follow that light for it is God calling you to his salvation. And don’t be like the majority of the world. When God gives them the gift of sight to see the light of God’s truth, they decide it is horrible and vicious and gouge their own eyes out so they no longer have to see. And then, living in the horror of darkness they simple spend their time declaring God wicked for what is going on. You need to grasp that the darkness doesn’t end until the Light comes again!

 And what is that Light? Dear people it is the love, grace and compassion of God for the souls of the world. The light of God is his total goodness. That God so loved the world that he promised and gave his son, his Only Son to pay for the sins of the world. That Son, Jesus, is the very embodiment of what the Glory of the Lord is.

 You want to understand God’s love for you, then look at Jesus. Look how he lived the perfect life you could not, lived in the thick darkness of the world and let his light, the light of his Father’s love shine for all to see. Jesus faced the darkness, was even put to death by the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome and won the victory. Jesus rose from the dead and with that actual physical resurrection has declared to the world the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. All this is just a part of what Jesus is.

 You want to understand God’s grace? Then look to Jesus and what He offers. He went to hell to pay for our sins! He took upon Himself the complete wrath and anger of God over sin, paid for it in full and then in total marvel offers it to you and me. Offers it by grace. Offers it, because He has it and we don’t! Offers it because He loves us and desires nothing better for us than eternal life and salvation. He even provides the eye sight and life we need to see and be. In Jesus everything good and wonderful is extended to us. That doesn’t mean that our lives are trouble free or no longer affected by the darkness. In Jesus we have the flashlight, sometimes the flood light of God’s truth to show us the way to go and be and live. It is God’s love and grace displayed to us in Jesus that can make the world bearable and the promise of life eternal our focus and goal. None of this is because we have to, but because Jesus has made it possible and we want to.

 Most important of all is the promise of life that is revealed in God’s Light Jesus. Even though we may face the reality of physical death, we understand by the power and promise of God that physical death is not the end, but rather the doorway to Him. When we die with the promises of Jesus, with the knowledge that because He lives so will we, well then, why is there anything to fear? Jesus promises that when our eyes close in this world they will open in His. Open to see our new mansion prepared for us. Open to the glory of eternity because of the Glory of Jesus. That is the promise of God. That is the hope, wonder and joy that is proclaimed in these verses of the Lord.

 Dear fellow believers, the Light has come. We today, in the New Testament, see that Light all the more. We grasp the wonder, the joy and the promise all the more. And as we put our hope and confidence in Jesus then verse 5 comes all the more true: **“You will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy.”** Thank you Jesus for this gracious gift. Amen.