Arise, Shine, Your Light has Come

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[0:00] Evening everyone. My name is Tom, if you didn't pick that up at the start. I've been involved with St. Columbians for a long time, but I'm now involved with the Esk Valley Church plant, and I'm not here so often now, so it's really good to be back and to be part of the fellowship again, so good to see you all, even if I've never met you before, it's good to see you.

And we're going to spend a bit of time, as Corey said, looking at this chapter primarily in Isaiah chapter 60. Isaiah, or Corey, rather, Corey prayed right at the start of the service for something very important. He prayed that God would give us hope. The question I was going to ask right at the start of the service is this, what hope is there for the nations?

Now, you see why I'm asking that question in just a minute, but it's a bit of a cliche, isn't it? I think, to look at the world and to feel a sense of despair sometimes, you maybe feel that very keenly tonight. There are many ways in which we can look around us and feel a sense of trouble closing in on us. Now, you maybe know that really personally tonight, but like I say, if you look at the headlines, I saw a number this week, and there's poverty and the threat of war, and so many different issues that are coming down on top of us, it feels all the time, and so the question goes out time and time again, and maybe in your social circles and on our news feeds and everywhere, what hope is there? What hope is there for the nations? What can the world do about itself? So I think a chapter like the one we're about to look at gives us the answer, and it gives us the hope that we need personally and that we need to proclaim to, we hope, a listening world. Trouble all around, and different people have different answers. It reminded me when I was thinking about this of George Orwell, who famously said in one of his novels, hope lies in the proles, or the proletariat. In other words, you need an uprising from below, you need the common people to rise up, stand up for what is good. Now, that's one perspective. Maybe another group of people would say, well, hope lies in a place like Davos in Switzerland, where we have a gathering this week of the World Economic Forum. Is that where hope lies for the world? Do you feel like those who gathered last week at Davos have your interests at heart? Are they going to help you? What are they going to do for you? And for everything that's going on in the world, that makes it such a difficult place. The slogan after all, I saw a brief excerpt of the Canadian Prime Minister speaking, and this is what it said on the wall behind him, in big words so everyone could see, committed to improving the state of the world. So there you go. Hope lies at Davos, perhaps. But what we find is we come towards the end of Isaiah, and we get this unfolding of the vision of what Isaiah describes in Isaiah chapter 60, is a clear picture of the hope for an expanded Zion, the hope that God pronounces to the world, which so amazingly and beautifully speaks to the nations of the world, and speaks into eternity. So that is what I want to bring out tonight. Hope for the world lies in being in this expanded notion of the Zion of God.

So we see that in a few different ways. But I want to start by saying that we go first of all to chapter verse 12. If I was to do a kind of breakdown of the chapter just in terms of how it works, how it's structured, some people are interested in this kind of thing, there's quite a formal structure here, which I'm not going to spend a lot of time on, but in many ways the heart of the chapter is verse 12. So in verse 12 we read about a very serious thing. It says in verse 12, for the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish, those nations shall be utterly laid waste. There's a pivotal issue going on here, and it's raising the fact that the world's real issue is to see God for who he is as the judge of all the world, the creator of all the world, the one to whom all the nations of the world should and will one day bow. But actually if you think about it, and as you may have noticed when we were reading through the chapter, the chapter is bookended.

It has the central pivot of this call, this fundamental need for repentance before the holy God, but it's bookended at the start and at the end by talk of a redeemer, a wonderful redeemer who is the hope,

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who is personally, centrally the hope that the nations must turn to. So we're going to see that as we go through the chapter. But we begin, and the first point I want to bring out is just this, that the redeemer and his repentant people of Zion, that's the first thing, the first kind of stage if you like in thinking about the hope for the nations. So it's grounded in this fact that the nations in the kingdoms that don't serve the Lord will perish. Repentance is absolutely vital. Come into a clear-eyed understanding of who we are, that we are created beings who stand before an awesome God, is our starting place that never changes, or has to become our starting place if it's never been that before. And so there's a need to be humbled before the God. But it also speaks, and if I could take you back to where Corey started reading from, the end of chapter 59, it speaks about this personal redeemer who comes in verse 20, a redeemer will come to
[5:44] Zion, a rescuer, a saviour. These people aren't self-sufficient. They don't have it, in other words, within themselves to redeem themselves. They need a redeemer. He is the one who is pronounced, who is spoken about, and who they are to trust in. So Isaiah is full of call.

I believe you've been looking at the servants' songs over the last few weeks, and there are frequently calls to people to repent, to return. That's another kind of concept that is frequently used. Return to me, says the Lord. I am your sovereign. I am the one over you. Return to me. Repent. Even if I was to go back just to pick a different example, different language at the start of chapter 55, come. Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. He who has no money, come, buy, and eat. God calls people to himself because he's the one who fixes them, and who heals them, and who satisfies them. So the first thing is to see this redeemer, and his people, those who are the repentant people, those who will humble themselves and who will come before him. And he's revealed, again, if I can just go back into chapter 59, specifically as a person, there is this notion that grows throughout the pages of the Old Testament of the Deliverer, the Messiah, the one who God will send to be the Deliverer.
And the first thing that we see is that he is the righteous one. Chapter 59, verse 16, the Lord saw that there was no man, wondered that there was no one to intercede, then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He is the righteous one. He himself has what it takes. He's the righteous one. What else? Verse 20, again, we've seen already a redeemer will come, a rescuer, one who will save people who are dying from darkness. He goes on to speak about deep, thick darkness, and he will bring them into life, and he will bring them into light. Now, there's good news. He's the righteous one. He's the redeemer.
Let me bring it into chapter 60. Let me just read through into verse 2. A rise shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you, for behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness to peoples. But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. So that's speaking here of the Lord. But again, this concept familiar to his nation, his people, the Israelites, the glory of the Lord. Good news again. The Lord is speaking to us again of his glory rising upon us. He's the righteous one. He's the redeemer. He's the glorious one. Here is news of hope. Now, in many ways, so far, so in keeping with expectations for God's covenant people, the Lord speaks to them again in terms which they know it's like music to their ears. He pronounces to them their waywardness throughout the prophecy, and he pronounces to them about himself, about his faithfulness, about his mercy, and he reveals himself as the one to whom they need to return. And so for if you think about the context, what are people going to be thinking when they're hearing this prophecy? How do people in Isaiah's day process this kind of stuff? Well, it's good news to them, but it's in keeping with how God has revealed himself to them. He's going to restore us again. Things are going to be as they were, perhaps, when we were gathered together, and together as a nation, not as they were in exile, scattered, beaten down, wandering. So the first news of hope is the redeemer and his repentant people of Zion. That's fundamental here. But this chapter, if you like, just takes off as we go through it, because the second thing that I want to see is the expansion, as I mentioned at the start, of this concept of Zion, the broadening of the picture, the expansion of Zion, the increasing, expanding role of the nations. So it goes on to speak of the nations and of the blessing of God to the nations in ways that would perhaps have been unimaginable to his covenant people at one time. A global gathering of the nations into his family.
[10:41] Now that is so much bigger. The picture is so much bigger for them to comprehend. Many of his people, after they return, again thinking contextually, after they return from exile and they gather again and they rebuild the temple, there's a sense of disappointment amongst some of the people, because they may be expected great things again. And yet in their time and in their place

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when they rebuild the temple, they're thinking, well, it's not quite the same. We're not quite the same as we were. The temple isn't quite the same as it was. We're not quite as glorious. Things aren't quite the same. And yet the vision that is presented in this chapter is so much bigger than the expectations and the vision that they had. How so? Well, verse 3, he's spoken about how the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you and nations shall come to your light. Now he's already said, arise and shine for your light will come and nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. In other words, ordinary people and royalty from all the nations will flock to the light that you have. There's an expansion of their picture, of their framework, if you like. One comment here, I like, Matier who I was reading says this, the nations don't come as mere porters of Zion's children, but as converts to the Lord in their own right and as his evangelists, as those who tell of his goodness.

Come down to verse 6, a multitude of camels shall cover you and young camels of Midian and Epha, all those from Sheba shall come, they shall bring gold and frankincense. Is that ringing bells? From the nations coming bringing gifts and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord. There are people coming from the nations of the world bringing good news and praises to the Lord who is the light. So these rulers and these ordinary people will come from the nations, but also as we go through this section, we didn't read all of the chapter, but as we go through this section, we see another thing, the nations will build and beautify this expanding Zion, this kingdom of God growing and expanding throughout the nations and throughout time as God builds his people down through the ages. So what we're seeing here is an unfolding picture of God's big picture of salvation down through the ages. The nations will build and beautify this new Zion. Verse 10, foreigners shall build up your walls and their kings shall minister to you. Verse 13, the glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the Cyprus, the plain and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary and I will make the place of my feet glorious. Now again, the people of his day reading this are considering this. When Solomon built his temple, he sent to the nations of the world to import some of the finest of the materials to beautify the temple and to beautify all that they were building. So again, is this just another expression of how they'll import some of the finest stuff to make the finest temple? Well, no. There's so much more going on here that speaks in bigger terms and picture language about the building throughout time and history and the beautifying as God brings people from all places into his family, into his kingdom, as his kingdom is being built together to the praise of his glorious name as he says at the end of that verse, and I will make the place of my feet the resting place where he will be glorious. What a big picture of what
God is doing and will do amongst the nations. And in many ways, you know what this is? This is the original story of globalization. This is the big global picture and it's the best one, isn't it? It's the best picture for the world. There are two examples came to my mind this week. As far as I know, there are two examples in advertising history where a soft drink is held out as not only tasty, but as the savior of the world. And the first example I thought of was actually comes at the end of a program that I enjoyed watching it suddenly cut to this advert. And it's from 1971 and it's an advert for Coca-Cola. And it's a very famous advert. And it's an advert that kind of pronounces this global picture of unity and harmony as the peoples of the world and all the different races come together and celebrate what they have in common. And of course what they have in common is a bottle of Coca-Cola branded each in their own language. But here's the lyrics. Very interesting what the lyrics say in the song that accompanies this advert. I'd like to buy the world a home and furnish it with love. Grow apple trees and honeybees and snow white turtle doves.
I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company. What the world wants today is the real thing. So there's a 1971 beginning of the era of globalization, market driven forces, pronouncement of what the world needs. There was a sense of optimism or perhaps slightly less optimism at the end of the 60s to the 70s, a sense of coming together of all the different nations of the world, of pronouncing their need for harmony and of unity exploited by a soft drink company of course. But what we get in this beautiful picture is of the nations coming together, focused around not just a sense of the worthiness that they have together or of their own attainment or of their beautiful characteristics but of the Lord himself as their need and as their fulfillment. Again, commentator says this, to confine a prophecy like this just to the return from Babylon of the Israelites is to fail to listen to what Isaiah is saying.
He looks for a worldwide regathering. The reality of this is the winning of the nations and the gathering of all into the heavenly Zion when the Lord Jesus returns. So we focus in on the

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Redeemer and his repentant people we focus on the expansion of Zion, the role of the nations and the blessing of the nations as they're called to hear this good news.
[17:44] And the third, final thing I want to focus in is this. In this big picture of this wonderful kingdom, everything will be better than it was because Jesus is the peace of Zion. Everything will be better because Jesus is the peace at the center of Zion. Again, just to go through the final section of the chapter, there's a sense of unfolding wonder as we go through these verses. What's it like to be a part of this movement? What's it look like there?

Is this something I want to be a part of? Is it good there? Are things better? Are they fixed? Well, in verse 11 we read about the gates. Your gates, you picture a city, a city which has been besieged as it were. Literally, they were besieged and they were held off captive. But here now we read this. Your gates shall be open continually. Day and night they shall not be shut. A picture that maybe you think initially of security, which would be fair, but it's also a picture of the gates open continually because people are constantly coming in. There's a constant stream of people coming into this place. Multitudes coming into this place. It's a picture also of brilliance. Verse 17, instead of bronze, I'll bring gold.
Instead of iron, I'll bring silver. Instead of wood, bronze. Instead of stones, iron. I will make your overseer's peace. The brilliance that is spoken of here reflects, in many ways, the glory of the Lord himself as we'll come on to see. It's a place of brilliance and of beauty. It's a place also of specifically security and of peace. In verse 16, at the end of verse 16, you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior. You shall know it. These were people who had been so fearful and exiled and broken and guilty, so messed up. And he says, you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob. You shall know this. At the end of verse 17, I will make your overseer's peace and your taskmaster's righteousness. I will make your overseer's, not exploiter's, but peace. So again, this expanding, and I've got time to bring out all the different ways in which we see this in this passage. Go home and read it through again and just see the way in which it unfolds in goodness and in splendor. Everything will be better, but specifically because of the presence of this Redeemer that we mentioned at the start. Again, remember
I said that this Redeemer, this figure bookends in many ways this chapter. And so here again at the end of this, what do we see? Verse 19, the sun shall no more be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light, but the Lord will be your everlasting light and your God will be your glory. He will be the one who is there, who is your light, who is your glory. It goes on in verse 20, the Lord will be your everlasting light and your days of mourning shall be ended. Now, God has revealed to us the Redeemer, the one who will make all this possible if we trust in him. He has shown us his son who gave up his life. You've been reading the songs over the last few weeks of the suffering servant and he is the one who has made this possible. He is the one who laid down his life, who in love became nothing and yet is the ascended and risen and glorified Lord of all the earth, the one before whom every knee shall bow. And he is the one who at the center of the throne rules and will one day be revealed in all of his glory before all of the nations and every knee will bow. And so of course we ask ourselves the question right now whether before him we're conscious of his majesty and whether before him our hearts are humble and thankful and grateful because the New Testament of course reveals to us the reality of Jesus, the righteous one, the one who laid down his life. But I want to, as we come towards the end of what I want to look at tonight, just read from Revelation chapter 21 because you'll see I think when I read how many parallels there are with this beautiful picture in Isaiah chapter 60 where we see again this wonderful reflection of God's provision in Jesus Christ, so I'm going to turn to Revelation chapter 21. Let me read from verse 10. Speaks about a new Jerusalem coming down, this new city of God coming down. And then we read, and he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. A picture there of the beauty, the splendour and the glory of this place. But then I'm going to go down to verse 22. And I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb.
[23:29] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb, the Lamb, the one who suffered, the servant, your servant who is at the centre of this beautiful place. By its light will the nations walk and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it and its gates will never be shut by day and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it. Nothing

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unclean will ever enter it. So this is God's picture that he wants us to see. And what I want to do is just finish by saying so what do we do with this? You enter a new week, you maybe are here tonight and considering God and wondering who he is and whether he is somebody who bears any relevance to your life whatsoever. You may be somebody who's been a Christian for a long time and you're wondering how to still go on following him and whether he is good for you and whether he will be faithful to his promises. So I just want to say two things in finishing and the first is this. We ask the question over and over again as we face trouble in person and as we look out and we see devastation and threat and fear all around us and we ask the question what hope is there for the nations. First thing is this, see the plan of God for the nations. Behold it, consider it, put it up in big letters before you. Be convinced again of God's power and his ability and his desire which has already been fulfilled in Jesus to bring this to effect. What a vision for the nations. But remember what a vision for those among the nations who will humble themselves and repent before the Lord. So that's the first thing, see again, be convinced of the big picture, the story of God for the nations. And the second thing is to this, to you, if you're somebody who has trusted in the Lord then don't fear. There is much to fear but I want to take you back to verse one because in verse one we read these words. He says to his people, arise, shine for your light has come. Now that is never more true than to you and I as we look back to the Redeemer Jesus. Your light has come. The Lord has displayed to you and I what he will do, what he has done because of his great love to purchase a people for himself from amongst all the nations which includes you and me. Arise and shine for your light, your Redeemer, your Saviour. You know him, you behold him, Jesus Christ, the suffering servant. The second soft drink I referenced Coca-Cola and of course their great rivals,

Pepsi brought out a rather unfortunate advert a couple of years or so ago and in this advert there were lots of young people who were very fresh and exciting and they were demonstrating something and they were faced by a line of very doer looking riot police or something and from amongst these young exciting demonstrators comes a celebrity, I can't remember which one and the point is that she comes out and she approaches these repressive people who are stopping them expressing themselves and demonstrating and being free and she hands them a kind of Pepsi. It's supposed to signify in some kind of way the liberation comes through being young and free and expressive and having Pepsi. And again the tagline, the lyrics to this advert are very instructive. They tell us a lot about what the perception is for hope amongst the nations. The final tagline for the advert is this, it talks in the song that accompanies the advert about our generation, we're going to rise up, we're going to shine.

And then it says live strong, live loud, live now. Fine. Except what's that telling you to do? It's telling you to find your own light inside of yourself which you can project to the world and which can in some way bring harmony and peace and healing among the nations.

And you know what, that is a terrible burden for you to have to bear. I don't have that within me and I don't think anyone here does. That we within ourselves have the light, the capacity, the ability to heal ourselves let alone bring healing to the nations. And so what we're counseled by God's word to do is to behold His light and to see over and over again that the provision is not found within ourselves but in His accomplishment in Jesus Christ. So a few verses just to leave you with. In John chapter 8, Jesus says, I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. In Matthew 5 he says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Now what does that look like? Well in 1 Peter then finally we read this, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. So know that light, Jesus Christ for yourself and being so convinced of his worthiness, hold out that light, proclaim that light to a world who so desperately needs him. I'm going to pray and then I'm going to finish and sing. Lord your ability is far more than ours. Your everything about you is awesome and great but we praise you that you reveal as much as we need to know of your purposes for the world. You speak truthfully to us of our condition and of our need and we pray that you would give us wisdom and love for those around us so that we can help or seek to help those who are in need and be a part of our society to bring good and to bring blessing but convince us Lord that you are our soul's satisfaction, you are our great rescuer and redeemer and please use us Lord so that more may be brought into your kingdom and so that your name might be glorified in our corner of the world. We pray that you would be very great in our eyes. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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