

**Sermon University Chapel**  
**Sunday January 4, 2015**  
**at 7: a.m.**

**Theme: Stewardship: Lectionary Sermon Topic “Arise and shine, your Light has come!”**

**Text: Isaiah 60: 1-6**

**Let us pray:** Father, may our voices speak clearly our devotion to you as they blend with the music of the spheres. Father, we pray for your perfect will to be done among us.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight O Lord my strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Today is celebrated as the Feast of the Epiphany in the Christian calendar. The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ. It commemorates the visit of the Magi (who were Gentiles) to the Christ child, and thus Jesus' physical manifestation to the Gentiles.

In Isaiah 60, the prophet speaks to the distraught and downhearted people who had lost their sense of purpose by asking them to, “Arise! Shine! Your light has come.” This gave heart to the Israelites who had languished in

exile and were existing in darkness, feeling that their God had abandoned them. So Isaiah's revelation gave them hope and comfort. The fulfillment of Isaiah's epiphany found its complete expression in the coming of Jesus Christ. In him the Wise Men discover the lasting light of eternal hope in all its brightness.

Is our world that much different from the ancient Israelites who were languishing in darkness? Cries from desperate hearts are heard everywhere. The darkness of the times, like that of past ages, finds its origin in the sins of greed, lust for power, abandonment of faith and many other related causes. While, physically, the sun continues to rise and set, abandonment of God's wisdom, guidance, love, forgiveness, and chastisement have caused the presence of the Son of God to become dimmed. Like the Israelites of old, people of this age cry out into the darkness which threatens their life.

The followers of Jesus – modern day disciples – are the bearers of good news that the dawn has come and with it the darkness is shattered and is passing. So how do we modern day disciples make this good news known to a lost and uncaring world?

We, who are followers of Jesus Christ recognize that we are not the source of the light that scatters the darkness of sin and evil, and shows life and love and hope to the

people walking darkness; we only reflect the greater light generated by Jesus who is the light of the world.

So let us now look at how our role as Stewards helps us reflect the light of Jesus in the Lord.

C.S. Lewis in “*Mere Christianity*” reminds us that “every faculty you have, your power of thinking or moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given to you by the power of God. If you devoted every moment of your entire life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense, His, already.

Let us consider 4 principles of Christian Stewardship:

1. The Principle of Ownership
2. The Principle of Responsibility
3. The Principle of Accountability
4. The Principle of Reward

### 1. **The Principle of Ownership**

Psalm 24 begins “*The earth is the Lords, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein....*”

The fundamental principle of biblical stewardship is the concept that God owns everything, and we are simply managers or administrators acting on his behalf.

Deuteronomy 8: 18 reminds us “Remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth”.

The book of Genesis tells us that in the beginning God created everything including man, to whom he gave the responsibility of taking care of all his creation.

Stewardship, therefore, expresses our obedience regarding the administration of everything God has placed under our control.

Stewardship is the commitment of one’s self and possessions to God’s service, recognizing that we do not have the right of control over our property or ourselves.

## **2. The Principle of Responsibility**

We should never forget that although God gives us everything to enjoy, nothing is ours – nothing belongs to us – God owns everything. Our responsibility lies in how we treat with what we are entrusted.

We might do well to remember that **owners** have rights; **stewards** have responsibilities.

### **3. The Principle of Accountability**

We have already learned that a Steward is one who manages the possessions of another. Therefore we are all stewards of the resources, abilities and opportunities that God has entrusted to our care, and one day each one of us will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us.

The **Parable of The Talents** eloquently exemplifies this principle. This is the parable which tells of an employer who was going on a journey, distributing his talents to three servants in his employ. One decided to bury his talent, as he was afraid he would lose it, the second traded his and got back returns. The third also invested his talents and got back some returns.

In this parable the point is made quite clearly, that if we fail to use the talents with which we are entrusted, we will lose them. The better account that we give of the talents entrusted to us, the greater will be our reward.

Like the servants in the Parable of the Talents, we will be called to give an account of how we have utilized what we have been given, including our time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and authority.

We will all have to give account to the rightful owner as to how well we managed the talents with which he has

entrusted to us. And we have already learned that the rightful owner of these resources is God.

In Charles Wesley's hymn of dedication "**Give Me The Faith Which Can Remove**" he encourages us all to give our all to the Lord:

*My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord  
Into Thy blessed hands receive;  
And let me live to preach Thy word,  
And let me to Thy glory live;  
My every sacred moment spend  
In publishing the sinner's Friend.*

How blessed we are that we have the opportunity to dedicate ourselves to God in this way.

### **The Principle of Reward.**

In Colossians 23: 24, Paul encourages us to work at whatever we do with all our hearts, as we are working for the Lord, not for men, since we know that we will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

And Matt. 25:21 assures us that in the end we will hear the words *Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.'*

We need to be faithful stewards of all that God has given us within the opportunities presented through his providence to glorify him, serve the common good and further his Kingdom.

As good stewards we are to shine in the midst of darkness. We are told by Jesus that you are to ***“let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”***

We lighten the darkness when we stoop to another’s lowest need, bend to someone’s faintest cry, and reach to support the falling wounded in Christ’s spirit of caring and love.

This reflected light that we cast on the shadow world can and does give hope and freedom. It opens the door that leads out of the darkness into his glorious light.

This reflected light can act as a magnet for others to the light. Just as the lighted bulb attracts moths to itself, so light shining into the dark night of someone’s life draws that person’s attention and usually his/her presence.

So you are encouraged to “Arise, shine! Your light has come and the glory of the Lord has shined upon you”. Now go, “let your light so shine before men that they may

see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Go out, be someone’s epiphany today.

**Let us pray:**

Father, we celebrate the coming of Jesus as the Light of the world: let his light be in our minds that it may scatter the shadows of our unreason, confusion, and resistance to the truth; let there be light in our behavior, freeing us from all selfishness, unworthy deeds, ungenerous acts, and the thoughtlessness that brings pain to others. So let the light shine in our hearts and Christ’s love reach every part of our lives.