



Sermon Growth Guide

January 8, 2023

The Great Rescue - The Glory

Isaiah 60:1-7

Key Verse: Isaiah 60:1 “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.”

Big Idea: When God’s light is received through Jesus Christ, we are compelled to let that light shine onto others and share the good news of the gospel.

Foundations

This week we conclude our Advent series:
The Great Rescue.

This series has focused on the Prophet Isaiah’s message to God’s people, calling them to repentance and promising restoration and reconciliation in the coming of the Messiah.

Isaiah’s message is much more than the restoration of the nation of Israel, however. The Messiah, as realized in the person of Jesus Christ as God incarnate, came to usher in a new covenant of grace which is available to all people.

The scarlet thread of redemption which runs throughout the entire Bible focuses on God’s initiating love and grace, which pursues a sinful people and welcomes them into His loving arms as they turn their hearts toward Him.

When God’s light in Christ Jesus illuminates and restores the human soul, the effects are both life-changing and profound. This light is good news, and good news should always be shared with others.

So, as we have received God’s light, we are called and compelled to share that light with others!

Understanding God’s Word

Read Isaiah 60:1-7.

What observations do you find when the word “light” is used?

What do you see as the effect(s) of God’s light coming upon us?

Applying God’s Word

How and when did God’s light come upon you?

In what way(s) did you experience transformation by God’s light?

To what extent did other people notice that something was different about you?

In what ways have you tried to shine God’s light with other people?

Witnessing God’s Word

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 instructs followers of Jesus to go and make disciples of others. This is best done in the context of trusted and authentic relationships. With whom might you share the light of Christ in this new year?

THE GREAT RESCUE • Isaiah 60:1-7 • Dave Steane • January 8, 2023

It is a joy and a privilege to be with you this morning for worship at First Pres! Today we conclude our Advent and Christmas sermon series, **The Great Rescue**. The focus on this series has been the important truth that because of our sinfulness, humanity needs to be rescued. That rescue isn't something that can be earned or bought. But God loved us so much that He became human in the person of Jesus Christ and allowed Jesus to suffer and die in our place so that we might be reconciled to God and eternally rescued. This Great Rescue is Good News! Amen?

Next Sunday, our Lead Pastor Tim McConnell will be back, and we'll begin a brand new sermon series entitled **Take Joy**. This will be an important, verse by verse study of Paul's letter to the Philippian church. We live in a day and age when it's easy to lose our hope and joy, don't we? Philippians gives powerful instruction to the Church to be joyful no matter what the circumstances. I hope you'll join us in person as often as you're able. As we now turn our attention to God's Word, let's commit this time to Him in prayer... (Read Isaiah 60:1-7). This is the Word of God. Thanks be to God!

January 15, 2009 started out to be a pretty normal day. The weather was mostly clear, a few broken clouds and an air temperature of 19 degrees near New York City. At 3:25 p.m., US Airways Flight 1549 took off from LaGuardia International Airport headed for the Charlotte Douglas International Airport. The Airbus A320 cleared the runway and began to climb toward its cruising altitude. At just over 2,800 feet, the plane, carrying 150 passengers and three flight attendants, collided with a large flock of Canadian geese. Passengers reported hearing loud bangs, seeing flames coming from the engines, and the smell of jet fuel in the cabin.

By now the plane was 4.5 miles from the LaGuardia airport, and Captain Chelsey "Sully" Sullenberger and First Officer Jeffrey Skiles realized that both the plane's engines were dead. Despite efforts to restart the engines, Flight 1549 continued to climb for a few seconds then became a giant powerless glider.

At this point in his career, Captain Sully had logged 19,663 hours of flight time, was an expert in aviation safety, and just happened to be a former fighter pilot with glider certification. Sully instinctively looked for a solution. He radioed a mayday and asked permission to return to LaGuardia. He was also given the option of an emergency landing at Teterboro in New Jersey. But Sully's training and experience kicked in and he realized that his only option was to ditch the plane in the Hudson River.

At 3:31 p.m., Flight 1549 ditched into the Hudson River on the New York side of the state line, near West 50th Street. The evacuation immediately began as water flowed into the plane's cabin. And most, if not all of us, remember the picture with passengers standing on the plane's wings awaiting rescue. Sully had deliberately ditched the plane close to the shore and close to several boats to facilitate the rescue efforts. Two ferries arrived within minutes. Numerous other boats were onsite very quickly, including the Coast Guard. Also on hand were police, firefighters and helicopters. Sully was the last person to exit the plane, but before doing so, he walked through the 41-degree water twice to ensure that every person had been evacuated.

I have just told you about what is now called "The Miracle on the Hudson," one of the greatest rescue stories in modern history. But today's final message in **The Great Rescue** series is less about the rescue and more about the aftermath. Because when a rescue happens, it is very good news and good news is meant to be shared!

In the aftermath, Sully and Skiles were affirmed for their decision-making and heroism by the National Transportation Safety Board. The crew received praise from President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Aviators. The crew attended Super Bowl XLIII and received a standing ovation. Sully threw out the first pitch of the 2009 Major League Baseball season in San Francisco and was named the Grand Marshall for the 2010 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California. And in 2013, the entire crew of Flight 1549 was inducted into the International Air and Space Hall of Fame.

Whenever something good news happens, we are compelled to share that news with others. When an engagement for marriage is announced, we usually see pictures like this (slides show an engagement ring photo) on social media. Or when a baby is born, we celebrate with the families when we see pictures like this (a baby photo). By the way, that was my daughter-in-law's hand and that was our grandson, Elias David Steane, who was born earlier this year.

Here at First Pres, there is much good news to share! One of the things we're always focused on at this time of year is the church's financial health. We wonder if we'll make our income goal for the year. We wonder how the next year's pledge campaign will turn out. Friends, I'm happy to say that as of Thursday, December 29th, we had received more

than enough income to say that we made the 2022 budget! And the 2023 pledge campaign has resulted in more pledges and more money pledged than in the last decade. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity and to God be the Glory!

Let's focus on what the Prophet Isaiah said in today's passage. To appreciate this passage, we have to consider the bigger message of Isaiah to God's people, which we've touched on during these past few weeks in this sermon series. Israel, like all of humanity, suffered from their sinfulness. This sinfulness isn't just a one-time oops, a mistake in judgment, or a careless omission. Rather, it is a dedicated and hard-hearted resistance to live according to God's values and standards. We create our own idols and do what is right in our own eyes. This creates a state of enmity between humanity and God, and every human effort to reconcile is futile.

Isaiah's mission was to name Israel's and humanity's problem, but also to announce God's plan of redemption. That redemption comes in the form of a Child. A Child Who would come from the House of David (Isaiah 7:13). A Child Who would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). A Child Whose Name would be Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). A Child Whose Name would also be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

This Child would grow into a Man, Who has no stately form or majesty, Who was acquainted with sorrows, Who was despised and rejected. (Isaiah 53:3). But also, this Child would bear our griefs, be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, and by His scourging we could be healed! (Isaiah 53:4-5).

And today we read: "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. 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 hip" (Isaiah 60:1-4).

Did you catch what Isaiah said? For the nation of Israel hearing these words, God's light has come, and Jerusalem is to be rebuilt and restored. This is tremendously good news, and the result will be a compelling and attractive force for sons, daughters, kings and nations as they are drawn toward the light of Israel's restored glory.

For God's people today hearing these words, because the Light of God has come in the person of Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, that light resides in us when we accept God's grace, and that light will also be so compelling and attractive that people are drawn toward that light. Remember, this is what Jesus said of us in Matthew 5:14: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."

Notice in verse 5 how Isaiah describes the effect that light has on us: "Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come."

When God's light enters us through **The Great Rescue** of Jesus Christ, the effects are both profound and noticeable.

In the days following Flight 1549, I wonder what the 155 survivors looked like? Certainly there was trauma and stress from having endured such a harrowing experience, but to be part of an amazing story of heroism and rescue must have changed the way they looked and most certainly changed the attitude of their heart. Can you imagine how many times that story has been told?

In January 2019, on the 10-year anniversary of "The Miracle on the Hudson," an article appeared which re-told the incredible story, and also shared insights and perspectives from some of the passengers. Tripp Harris was one of those passengers, and looking back on the experience, he commented, "The crash made me a better family man. Everything that I could think about was the things I was going to miss. That fundamentally shifted my priorities."

The effects of being rescued can be profound, life changing indeed. If we have been rescued by God's grace in Jesus Christ, then we, too, have a story to tell!

Shane Taylor is a man with a powerful story. By the time Shane was a young adult in England, he was a renowned thug. He was involved in everything you could think of that was illegal and immoral. Drugs, robbery and violence were his way of life. He ended up in prison for stabbing one man in the eye and stabbing another in the chest. He had a deep hatred for anyone or anything in authority. But while in prison, Shane decided to attend Alpha. Initially he dismissed it as something irrelevant since it was a Christian thing. But God's light shone on Shane and melted his heart to repentance. The vilest of offenders was made clean and, today, Shane is married with four kids, and he says the highlight of

his life is doing Bible study with his family. You can see his testimony by searching Shane Taylor Alpha Testimony. And just a reminder that Alpha starts on Wednesday, January 11 here at First Pres. Perhaps you might attend? Or perhaps you might invite someone to attend with you?

Scripture is clear about the imperative that followers of Jesus Christ are to be His witnesses. Some of us may have dramatic stories of transformation like Shane Taylor's. For others of us, our transformation might far less dramatic. Some of us are extroverts. Some of us are introverts. Some of us are somewhere in between. But regardless of our story or our personality, God's call is on us to share His light, and allow that light to draw people into His loving arms.

Jerry Sittser, in his brilliant book, *Resilient Faith*, addressed this in a very helpful way. His thesis is that, in the first few centuries, there were three approaches to Christians interacting with culture. One way was the Roman Way or the accommodation way: The Christian's life and faith was accommodated into, or shaped by, the culture. The second way was the Jewish Way or the separation way: Christians were to separate themselves entirely from the unholy world. The third way was the Christian way: Christians understood their call to holiness but integrated into the fabric of society with a tremendously successful influence through their attitude, acts of service, and Christ-like demeanor.

Sittser describes the early Christians as being normal members of society. They shopped in the local stores. They attended weddings and funerals. They ate meals with neighbors. They cared for people. In other words, they weren't weirdos or religious freaks. They were...normal.

But these early Christians also had unique values and behaviors that made them attractive. They were kind and compassionate. They served others. They adopted orphans. They practiced hospitality. They forgave when they received abuse. They exhibited joy in the midst of any and all circumstances. Such was their quality of life that people became curious and found themselves attracted to the Christian way.

Charley Mackesy is a wonderful British artist, best known for his book and illustrations known as *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, And the Horse*. Today, Charley is a fully dedicated (but occasionally messy) Christian. But Charley spent a good portion of his adult life as an atheist, agnostic, and quite suspicious of Christians. Through the encouragement of friends, he began to explore faith issues and this

led him to spend some time in an impoverished village in Africa. He tells the story of sitting in a hut and speaking with the woman who lived there. She asked Charley if he knew that he was truly loved by God. Charley was speechless. Here was a woman who lived in poverty, struggled to feed her family, and faced the very real threat of danger and disease. But this woman had incredible joy and contentment, and she knew that she was completely and totally loved by God. This encounter was pivotal and became transformational in Charley's life and faith journey.

It seems to me that this is what it looks like for us to arise and let the light of Christ shine. And the good news is that we can do this regardless of if we're introverts or extroverts, if we've had a dramatic or not-so dramatic transformation in Christ.

It's about being...normal. It's about embracing the Christian way, as Jerry Sittser describes. It's about being a good friend or neighbor or co-worker or patron who genuinely cares for and invests in people. And then, in the context of those relationships, we can share our stories and hear the stories of others. And it's always amazed me how those conversations can take a Holy Spirit-inspired spiritual turn.

Dave Peterson, my good friend and former Senior Pastor at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church in Houston puts it this way: "Christianity advances at the speed of relationships." I wonder with whom you might let the light of Christ shine?

Light is one of the most powerful forces in all of creation. It provides a point of reference. It provides protection. It provides direction. It allows us to see things as they really are.

Some years ago, Jenny and I were walking through a Bed, Bath & Beyond and we came to the bathroom section where a large selection of illuminated magnifying mirrors were on display. I found the most powerful one, turned on the light, and stuck my face in front of it. Absolutely terrifying! But I guess that's what I really look like up close and personal!

The Great Rescue affirms:

- *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light* (Isaiah 9:2).
 - *But the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you* (Isaiah 60:2).
- So, therefore: *Arise, shine, for your light has come!* (Isaiah 60:1).

Amen.