

The first Sunday in 2013; the first sermon of the New Year; hear the word of the Lord: *Isaiah 60:1 (NRSV) Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.*

Upon who? Upon you; you who have come this morning with high hopes for what the year will bring – your light has come; and upon you; you who barely made it to church and have been wondering what you are doing here ever since; you’re not sure what to believe or if you can believe – your light has come; and upon you; you who find it hard to hope this morning; darkness dwells in your family; the demons are dancing; pain is ever-present; you want more than anything to believe 2013 will work out and bring better days, but the darkness, the darkness – your light has come. Upon you, saint and sinner, true believer and doubting Thomas, the good, the bad, and the indifferent; your light has come.

Your light has come, and what do you see? Glory? A dream come true? Peace in the valley and happiness in the home?

No, we see the distance that separates the way it is from the way it ought to be. We see that we still have so far to go on our journey from vision to reality, from “I have a dream” to “free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last.”

We have so far to go, and that great distance isn’t measured in meters or miles; it takes the measure of us; it reveals what we are made of and invites us to be re-made, transformed from stragglers in the night to a beacon of hope for the world. It invites us in 2013 to “get up and glow.”

God isn’t asking us to create light or to generate illumination; that’s God’s work, and God has done that work! God shined in being born in human flesh at Christmas. John 1:5 (NRSV) *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.* God shined in being baptized in the Jordan

by John. *Mark 1:11 (NRSV) “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”* God shined on the cross. *Matthew 27:54 (NRSV) “Truly this man was God’s Son!”* And three days later, on Easter morn, God shined from an empty tomb through an encounter on the road to Emmaus: *Luke 24:25–26 (NRSV) “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”*

God has done that work. Light has shined upon you; upon us. God has given us all that we need to do what God is calling us to do; namely, to be light in the darkness, hope in the despair, peace in the turmoil. God has given us all that we need to be the body of Christ in this world, in this time, at this place.

And for you personally, with the New Year looming before you with all the demons and the darkness surrounding you and standing in your way, God has given you all that you need. You can endure. You can overcome. *John 16:33 (NIV84) “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

We don’t need to build capacity; we need to accept it, to acknowledge it, to own that we don’t have any excuses. If we choose to be light in the darkness, we will be light in the darkness. If we choose to have a “happy New Year,” we will have a happy new year; no matter what the days throw at us. When we say, “Here am I, Lord, send me,” light shines, darkness flees, and we do overcome!

No matter what: *Isaiah 60:1 (NRSV) Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.* Measure up to the distance between the dream and the reality! Pennside Presbyterian Church, in 2013: Get up and glow! Amen.

