

## Happy Zion And Her Children.

Text: Isa 60:1-6

1) Happy Zion

Suggested Hymns:

2) Her Children

627, 40, 231, 283, 43

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Isaiah 60:1-6, <sup>1</sup> *Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.* <sup>2</sup> *For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.* <sup>3</sup> *The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.*

<sup>4</sup> *“Lift up your eyes all around, and see: They all gather together, they come to you; Your sons shall come from afar, And your daughters shall be nursed at your side.* <sup>5</sup> *Then you shall see and become radiant, And your heart shall swell with joy; Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.*

<sup>6</sup> *The multitude of camels shall cover your land, The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba shall come; They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*All those from Sheba shall come; They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.* These words of our text point to the Gospel of the day which tells of the wise men who came from the East to Jerusalem in search of the new-born King of the Jews, and were directed to Bethlehem where they found Him, and worshiped Him, and presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These wise men were the first Gentiles that came to the new-born Saviour. In commemoration of this event a special festival has been set in the Christian Church year, the festival of Epiphany, which is on the sixth day of January.

The meaning of Epiphany is manifestation, and it is called so because the Saviour manifested, or showed Himself to the Gentiles. The festival of Epiphany is, in fact, another Christmas Day, the Gentiles' Christmas Day, because it reveals the great truth which is so important to us all, that Jesus is the Saviour of the Gentiles also.

In the Epistle which has been chosen for the festival of Epiphany, the Prophet has a great deal to say about the Gentiles. In prophetic vision he sees them coming in great numbers, and from all directions, to Zion, which represents the Church of the living God.

He sees them gathering around Zion as children gathering around their mother. And how pleased is the mother to see those around her whom she loves! How delighted are her children! The hymnist wrote "*Happy Zion, happy Zion, what a happy lot is thine!*"<sup>1</sup>

The subject of our meditation is *Happy Zion And Her Children*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Happy Zion.

Our text begins, <sup>1</sup> *Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.* To whom does the Prophet address these words? To Zion; for he distinctly says in the passage preceding our text, *The Redeemer will come to Zion.*<sup>2</sup>

And what does he mean by Zion? The Church of the living God; for he says, as we read in Isaiah 59:20–60:1, <sup>20</sup> "*The Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,*" Says the LORD. <sup>21</sup> "*As for Me,*" says the LORD, "*this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants,*" says the LORD, "*from this time and forevermore.*"<sup>1</sup> *Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.*

Look at the joy and happiness that the Prophet predicts for the Church of God in these words! He says that the Redeemer shall come, that His Spirit and

His Word will not depart from His people, that light will come, and the glory of the Lord will rise upon them.

By divine inspiration the Prophet sees a happy Zion in the future far away. He sees the time coming when all shall be fair and bright in the city of God. It was not so in the days of Isaiah. The believers in the true God were but only a few then, and they were burdened with the Law and bound by precepts and statutes, and great sufferings were in store for them in the near future; for they were to be led away into the Babylonian captivity.

But the Prophet sees the Redeemer coming, the promised Messiah, and the happiness He brings to His people! Having the Redeemer present with them, having Immanuel, God with us, having the Deliverer from sin and death and hell, the Messiah, the Rest-bringer, who says in Matthew 11:28, <sup>28</sup> *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* certainly brings happiness to the people.

The happy state of Zion presents itself all the more when it is compared with the state of the rest of the world. The Prophet says, <sup>2</sup> *For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.*

Here the Prophet sees darkness covering the whole earth, gross darkness, as was the darkness in the land of Egypt before the exodus, when for three days they did not see one another.<sup>3</sup> But in Egypt there was a province where they had light in their dwellings, the province of Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt.

Likewise the Prophet sees a spot in the world where there is light, light so brilliant that it penetrates the thickest darkness. It is Zion. There the Lord rises, rises like the sun in the morning, when he appears above the hills and sends His rays across the land. There the glory of the Lord is seen.

There God manifests Himself in His majesty, in His omnipotence, in His power, in His faithfulness, in His kindness and love. Now Zion, as we have heard before, is the Church of God, and the Church which the Prophet has in his mind is the Church of the New Testament.

And is not Zion, is not the Church of God in the time of the New Testament, in the happiest state? Look, what darkness covers the earth, and what gross

darkness is upon the people round about her! What do people know about the true God? Is not the whole world given to idolatry?

Do not the coarse heathen pray to wood and stone and other creatures, and do not the refined heathen worship gods that have sprung forth from their own minds? And how miserable are they, dwelling in darkness without a ray of light to gladden their hearts, and to make them sure of the fact that God is reconciled with them, pleased with them, and that He will give them eternal life!

But O how happy is Zion! Unto Zion the light has come, the Light of the world, and the Light of life. In Zion there is no darkness, no ignorance as to the true God, no uncertainty as to the way to eternal life. To the Church of God in the time of the New Testament the promised Saviour came, the Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary, and He remains with her, and is with her always, even unto the end of the world.

Come to Zion, my friend; here is true happiness. You may think that you are happy outside of Zion, but you are not. You may find your joy in the riches, honours, and pleasures of this present world, and think that these make you happy, but where is your happiness when that stern monitor, the voice of conscience within you, reminds you of the fact that you are a sinner, and that God will surely punish you?

Where will your happiness be when death comes, and ushers you into the presence of that holy God whom you have so grievously offended? No; come to Zion! See that you are a member of the invisible Church, of the assembly of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. Here is true happiness.

See that with a true heart you believe in the Saviour Jesus who bled and died on the cross for your sins, and you will have peace with God, you will have a quieted and not a seared conscience, you will have forgiveness of all your sins through the Saviour's blood, you will have comfort in all the troubles and afflictions of this present life, and with fearlessness you will look into death's grim face and pass through death's door into the heavenly mansions.

Happy is Zion, and a happy lot is yours if you identify yourself with the city of God.

## **2. Her children.**

Having considered happy Zion, let us now, in the second place, consider her children. The Prophet says to Zion, <sup>4</sup> ***“Lift up your eyes all around, and see: They all gather together, they come to you; Your sons shall come from afar, And your daughters shall be nursed at your side.***

Here the Prophet speaks of the sons and daughters, and to the end of our Epistle the children of Zion are the subject of his discourse. Who are the children of Zion? Who are the sons and daughters of the Church of God? They are those people who are gathered into Zion, those who are received into the Church, those who are made members of that great mystic body whose head is Christ. Now of these children of Zion the Prophet has several things to say.

He says, <sup>3</sup> ***The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.*** This prophecy was gloriously fulfilled as to the Gentiles becoming children of Zion! Did not Gentiles come from the Orient and worship the heavenly Child in Bethlehem?

Did not old Simeon refer to this prophecy of Isaiah when he took the babe Jesus up in his arms and exclaimed in Luke 2:29–32, <sup>29</sup> ***“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen Your salvation <sup>31</sup> Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles?***

Did not the Apostles proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles, and were not the Gentiles received into the Christian Church in great numbers? Missionaries are still sent to the heathen, and this blessed work is still continuing to bring to the Gentiles the Light of the world which dispels darkness and superstition and enlightens them with the truth.

The Prophet says furthermore, <sup>5</sup> ***Then you shall see and become radiant, And your heart shall swell with joy; Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.***

Two things are said here of the children of Zion, that in great numbers they shall come from distant lands beyond the sea, and that their coming shall cause joy, exceeding great joy to Zion.

And has not, the voice of the Gospel reached the most distant heathen? Has not the Gospel been proclaimed upon the isles in the sea? Has not the abundance

of the sea been converted to Christ, the greater number of those who formerly were heathen?

And much joy is caused in the Church by the conversion of the heathen! The children of God rejoice when they see that the work which the Lord commanded them to do has not been done in vain, when they see what blessed fruit the Gospel brings forth in those who believe, when they have observed the command to arise and to shine, when they have brought the Gospel to others, and see the wonderful effects which the Gospel has wrought!

Let us show more energy and zeal in missionary work and we shall see that our work for the Lord has not been in vain. Joy, exceedingly great joy, shall come to our hearts.

Upon every Christian is placed the duty to do his or her part and to share in missionary work. To do that work you do not need to go to the distant heathen in foreign lands, but you can do it at home.

You may have friends who are not children of Zion as yet, or who have ceased to be children of Zion. You may have friends in the world whom you can encourage to join the ranks of Christ's followers.

Speak to them kindly, speak to them of the one thing that is needful, invite them, ask them to go to church with you, offer to call for them and to take them along with you when you go to church.

If in church you see a stranger introduce yourself to him, speak to him, express your joy to see him, and invite him to come again. Introduce him to your friends in the church, and maybe ask him to join the congregation. This is missionary work, a blessed work, a work which will bring true joy to your heart.

Finally the Prophet says, *<sup>6</sup> The multitude of camels shall cover your land, The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba shall come; They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.*

In his vision the Prophet sees long caravans of loaded camels and the young camels coming to Zion with stores of wealth. He had seen the kings coming, and now he sees the merchants coming. Both, kings and merchants, Zion receives as her children.

The kings bring to her their sceptres and their crowns, and the merchants and wise men place at her disposal their wealth, their gold and incense.

In the Church of God all are considered alike, and one is not above the other, whether he be king or beggar, rich or poor. One is our Master, Christ, and we all are brethren. The king is as great a sinner before God as any of his subjects, and the man of wealth cannot buy heaven with his money and goods.

But what an incentive for others to come to Christ and to worship Him when even kings and wise men bow before Him! And what better use could a man make of his wealth, of his earthly goods, than to support the kingdom of God.

As we are children of Zion, then, let us show forth the praises of the Lord not only with our lips, but also with our hands, in giving freely for Christ as the wise men did who presented to Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, for the maintenance, support, and extension of His glorious kingdom, to the honour and glory of His holy name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Kelly, "Zion stands by hills surrounded"

<sup>2</sup> Isa 59:20

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 10:21-23