

"Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you."

Isaiah 60:1

For Goodness Sake

FOR ONE BORN AND RAISED IN the American Midwest, a Christmas without snow is a visceral disappointment. This year the mild December has left us with only the barest dusting of white in the shaded nooks and crannies around the pond. All else in the landscape is painted in muted tans and browns, or the blackish gray of dormant oak and hickory trees.

But dawn on Christmas Day brought a worthy substitute. After almost a week of dismal, dreary, overcast days, Christmas Day dawned with glorious, breathtaking splendor. Immediately the words of the chorus in Handel's *Messiah*, taken from Isaiah 40, sprang to mind:

*And the glory, the glory of the Lord
Shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together.*

Suddenly in place of slate-gray gloom was a firmament painted in splashes of blue and pink directly overhead, with a glowing margin at the horizon of deep orange and red and lavender. The glory of almighty God broke anew to herald and anoint this day in which we celebrate the incarnation of His Son.

Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

Exodus 33:18-19

Moses asked to see Yahweh's glory. The Lord God agreed, saying, "All right, I will show you My goodness." Could there possibly be any better demonstration of God's goodness than the giving of

His Son for man? Is there any revelation of God's glory superior to His own Son?

Jesus Himself spoke to this when he challenged the premise of a man who made what seemed at first to be an innocent inquiry of Him.

As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

Mark 10:17-18

More than just addressing the fallacy of doing something to gain salvation, before anything else Jesus challenged the man to make a critical decision about who it was standing before him. Was Jesus a mere teacher, or was He God? Either Jesus is God in flesh, or He is not "good." If Jesus is not good, He is not the glory of God, and has no power over eternal life.

Every person must decide for himself: Is the child of Christmas really God incarnate, or is he just another cute baby?

Do you want to see God's glory? Look in the manger. Do you want to see God's love? Look to the cross.

Christ's life on earth, from stable birth to death and resurrection, shines as the earthly manifestation of God's glory. And the good news of Christ Jesus played out in the life of every believer is the living demonstration of His everlasting goodness.

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 5:20