

“So Very Shiny”

New London UMC

Sun., Jan. 2 & Mon., Jan. 3, 2022

Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12 *The Message*

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I want to show you something . . . actually, a few things! The first is this star ornament. Would you say that it is shiny? It does catch the light, doesn't it? . . . But the next shiny object is a Swarovski® crystal “Mo” cow figurine. Well, perhaps a better description would be “angel cow” because it has little wings on its back – and if you hold it up just so to the light, you can see that there are stars in its body. From where you are seated, you will probably have to trust me on that. . . . The third object is a Christmas ornament that was nicknamed the “disco ball” – for its obviously shiny, mirrored ball charm. . . . And the last thing in the basket is this angel. You might be thinking, “well that it isn't very shiny,” but you could be wrong about that. Unlike the other things from this basket, this angel has a light within it – so it is shiny from the inside out. The other things we looked at could only reflect an external light source, and their shininess was only skin deep – so to speak. . . . But as you can see with this star – it is possible for it to both “shine” in the light of the angel AND to let that angelic light shine THROUGH IT. To both reflect and allow transmission of the light. The star can aide the light and not block it.

Obviously this light and star are a tiny example of the kind of light the prophet Isaiah spoke about. Isaiah tells us how the sunlight of God's bright glory rises out of the darkness and breaks over us. And how God's sunrise glory both shines on us and through us. It “lights” us up, and other people are drawn to our light. We become like stars that shine because of the glorious light of God's sun upon us. And we can shine as brightly and distinctively as the star the magi studied when it appeared in the eastern sky.

Are you feeling a little less than shine-y bright today? Does it seem like the darkness of worries and concerns in your life, and in our world, are blocking out God's light? I think that's why Isaiah also encourages us to: Look up! Look around! See the changes God is already bringing about! See them and SMILE – big smiles! Feel your heart swell with love and wonder, and be overcome with the desire to give thanks to God! Lift up your eyes! Lift up your hearts! Lift up your praise! . . . Because as children of God, if we can't shine – then who can? We're here to share the light of God's glory. That's our purpose.

And I believe our “star word” can guide us in sharing the light of God's glory. And my prayer is that our “star word” can become our “star power” to HEAL and bring light all around us. I know you've already listened to the amplified description of HEAL – but let me re-amplify it for you:

HEAR – really listen deeply to *why* people say what they say and try to understand where they are coming from, and why that may be very different from where you are at – or perhaps you'll find that you actually share similar concerns.

ENGAGE – in not only understanding someone else better, but by inviting them to get to know you and to understand more about you. Develop a relationship.

ACT – you’ve learned about each other’s concerns, so how can you address those concerns? What steps can be taken to bring about positive change? Start taking those steps. Or to paraphrase Kelly Clarkson, “if you don’t like it, change it.”

LEAD – when other people see you take action to change things for the better, you set an example that can inspire them to join in – or to be motivated to initiate their own positive change.

Doing this is not rocket science. Each of us is able to hear, engage, act, and lead. And what really enables each of us to do this is our relationship with God. Each of us is a beloved child of God. And when all of the children of God hear, engage, act, and lead we can shine with the powerful, healing light of God’s glory. We already know that there are a lot of people who need this powerful, healing light to shine through the darkness that they feel trapped in. They need us to really shine because they need to see that God’s love for them is real, and that is really there for them. They need to know that it is possible to be healed. They need to hear how we’ve been healed, and where we’re still working on healing. They need our support as they risk taking the first step to begin healing from their own sorrow, anger, loneliness, denial, or pain. They need our encouragement to keep going, and to stay connected with God’s steadfast love and grace. They need us to stay as shine-y bright as we can be with the light of God’s glory. And that’s what we can do with God’s help.

My sisters and brothers, may you be like stars that shine in the darkness so that others may be drawn to find the healing light of God’s love for themselves.

Amen.