

## group Bible Study – March 7, 2007

### Read Isaiah chapters 60-66

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We've come to the end of our study of Isaiah this quarter, and our last reading sends us out from this book in a powerful way. Throughout this book we've seen a few major themes come up over and over again: the people have failed in their covenant with the LORD, and have failed to truly be God's missionary people on the earth. God's people were supposed to be God's way of blessing all nations, but often they fell away from that high calling. Hearts grow hard, and desires become selfish.

But hope is the last word, because God has plans for his people and for the whole world – plans for blessing and peace. Isaiah the poet paints some of the most beautiful portraits in all of the scriptures, images of a future world where Yahweh is the Lord and humanity lives as God always intended. This is the vision of the future that should drive us forward, making us restless for the day when God's presence will fill the earth.

If we believe this divinely inspired vision of the future of the world, then the critical question we must answer is, "What do we do now?" How does this vision of God's future change our lives in the present?

"Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." (Is. 60:1)

Arise! Shine! The glory of God has not yet risen over us completely, but that is the whole point of *faith*. Faith in God's story means believing that this future *is really coming*, even though we have not yet seen the final salvation of God's world with our eyes. We believe, and so for us it is as if the future were already here. This is what it means to be the people of God today: Arise! Shine! For the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. This is a calling to live in a whole new reality – to live in the future kingdom of God, instead of living as if we belonged only to the brokenness of creation.

When we grasp this vision of the future – this vision of the kingdom of God alive in all the earth – we are set free to be sent on a mission to the world. God calls us to be a missionary people. We are people from the future, sent into the present to make it look more and more like the future. This is epic stuff.

This calling to be God's people is explained beautifully in Isaiah 61. What does it look like to live as the people of God's future?

"The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor..." (Is. 61:1-2)

Amen.