

Prayer of Preparation: *This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.* Gracious God, may your light shine so brightly within us that we become light to the world.

I have a confession to make...it's not Epiphany Sunday. The twelve days of Christmas aren't over, so the decorations are still up. In fact, the decorations are supposed to be up. This is actually the 2nd Sunday after Christmas and the 12th day of Christmas is tomorrow, January 5th. Then, and only then, is it acceptable to take the decorations down...except that's a rule we decided to make. My advice, keep your trees up as long as wish. Keep the spirit of Christmas alive within your heart and within your mind.

Here's the thing about Christmas, and what Christmas represents: the Light of the world has come. God has kept God's promise of salvation to us **and** to all of creation. God's promise to all of creation is alive and well. God's promise to all of creation is alive and well and that promise lives in each of us. The question becomes: what do we do with this promise?

We let God's promise shine through us in all that we say and all that we do. In a world that's dark and dangerous, we **shine**. Our *hope* shines. Our *peace* shines. Our *joy* shines. Our *love* shines. All that we are, all that God has given us, shines. Our *hope*, *peace*, *joy*, and *love* shine so brightly that everyone sees us. Not just sees us, but sees the Christ in us. We shine so brightly the world is drawn to us. We shine so bright, people come to us...for a Word; for **the** Word of God.

Here's how Isaiah says it: *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.*

Family of God, I want you to hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ with a fresh ear: God's glory will appear over us...and we will **shine**. God's light, revealed to us in Jesus Christ, will shine in us and through us. That light is how people will know *who* we are. That light is how people will know *whose* we are. That light is when we shine so brightly that we are beautiful; we are beautifully covered with God's love.

When we embody God's hope, peace, joy, and love we **shine**. Matthew's gospel says it this way: *the Magi set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.* God sent a star to rest over the Jesus' home and God sends God's glory to rest over you. Not just over you but within you as well.

Today we are celebrating Epiphany Sunday because I want to. And I want to because it's a new year, a time to renew our intentions for the year to come. Here's my intention – to shine with all the hope, peace, joy, and love that God has given me in Jesus Christ. May you be faithful in shining with me.

Response to the Word: *Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine. Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let shine. Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*