
Arise, Shine, For Your Light Has Come!

An article for the *Cathedral Times* by Dean Sam Candler

This past Monday morning, I was up early, as usual. Every morning, no matter where I am, I tend to rise before daylight, when the sky is still beautifully dark. Like many of you, I often find my prayer and contemplation most fruitful at that time of day. I often find my study and writing most fruitful at that time of day, too.

Often, if I have slept well, my mind is freshest during the predawn hours. But the other feature of those hours that inspires me is the sheer darkness of the world. When the sky is black, somehow my spirit is free to concentrate on other matters besides all those images that careen into my day. We see so many things during the day! We hardly have time to pause and truly appreciate many of them! But at night, our souls are somehow free to focus on other matters, matters of the spirit, which I believe we see more easily in the darkness of night. In the dark, we are not distracted by physically seeing so much!

But on Monday, I did my prayer and contemplation while running. Yes, one must be careful running in Atlanta when it is still dark outside! I walked for a while and then ran up to the cathedral hill. As many of you know, from that rather high point, one can see a beautiful sky, day or night. On Monday morning, I was overwhelmed with a distinctively glorious sight. There was Venus—the “morning star”—shining so brightly above the eastern horizon that she almost spilled forth a “glory path!” (A “glory path” is what my grandmother called the stream of light from the sun at sunset when it splashed down the lake or across the ocean.) Below Venus were two other magnificent lights: Jupiter and Mars were right next to each other. What a beautiful trinity of early morning lights! In a little while, I also saw the planet Mercury rise below them. Glorious!

Those inspiring lights were my morning prayer on Monday. But they prompted me to sing one of my favorite Morning Prayer canticles, Canticle 11 (“The Third Song of Isaiah,” from Isaiah chapter 60). I share it this week as a prayer for all of us, a prayer for the morning, but also a prayer for new life at any time of day:

Arise, shine, for your light has come, *
and the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.
For behold, darkness covers the land; *
deep gloom enshrouds the peoples.
But over you the Lord will rise, *
and his glory will appear upon you.
Nations will stream to your light, *
and kings to the brightness of your dawning.
Your gates will always be open; *
by day or night they will never be shut.
They will call you, The City of the Lord, *
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
Violence will no more be heard in your land, *
ruin or destruction within your borders.
You will call your walls, Salvation, *
and all your portals, Praise.
The sun will no more be your light by day; *
by night you will not need the brightness of the moon.

The Lord will be your everlasting light, *
and your God will be your glory.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

(From *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 87, Isaiah 60:1-3, 11a, 14c, 18-19)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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