

Arise, Shine!

"A New Thing" Series, September 5 & 6, 2026 with Communion | Isaiah 60:1-7, Isaiah 65:17-25

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What keeps us off mission instead of on mission?

Most YMCAs do good things but are "off mission."

The Young Men's Christian Association was started in London in 1844 by George Williams who had moved to London from his farm home. He was surrounded by men coming to London for industrial jobs, and he wanted to help them follow Jesus in the city. It started with twelve men studying the Bible, praying, and figuring out life together.¹ Today, YMCA strives to build healthy spirits, minds, and bodies, but most of us just think of gyms. George Williams probably wouldn't recognize them because that's not the same as the founding mission. It's easy to go "off mission" and it's a trap many of us fall into.

What does it mean to be "on mission"?

Being "on mission" starts with God. God is on mission creating, redeeming, and sanctifying a people for Himself. Being on mission means that we join Him in that mission. We live as disciples of Jesus who make disciples who make disciples. That's being "on mission."

Why do we go "off mission"?

I think there are four main reasons. 1. We fear standing out or being rejected. We don't want to make other people uncomfortable. 2. We treat darkness as something to endure. We see the darkness around us and think that we have to keep ourselves and our families safe, instead of thinking about how we can shine in the darkness. 3. We don't know what to say or do. We think that we've got to build an air-tight argument for the Gospel because we don't want to mess up or get asked a question we can't answer. 4. We are consumed with other things. Our schedules and minds are so full that we can't even think about making space for other people. I'm sure there are others, but for some reason, some of us go off mission. If you're off mission, what is your reason?

However, we are like glow-in-the-dark wrist bands.

Earlier this summer, we gave out glow-in-the-dark wrist bands to remind you of our 50th Anniversary celebration next weekend. If you put that wrist band in the light, it absorbs and stores some of the energy from the light. It's glowing all the time, but if you take it into the dark, it really glows, radiating the light that it has been filled with. You and I are like that. The light of God's glory is shining on us; we're absorbing it and storing it up. We're reflecting and radiating that light back out to the world. That's who we are as Christians.

God makes Christians light in the darkness.

¹ <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/ymca-founded>

We shine His light into the darkness. It's not just a job for us to do. It's part of who we are. We are inherently "on mission." And the world desperately needs us.

Darkness covers the face of the earth.

Darkness is the starting condition of the world.

God lets us know that in **Isaiah 60:2**,

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples ...

Darkness is the absence of light. God is light. So, darkness is reality for anyone who has turned their back on God. That's most people, but it's not just personal. Darkness infects nations, and you can feel the darkness.

The surge in loneliness shows us that darkness is real.

For more than a decade, studies have shown that people are increasingly lonely. We're joining fewer clubs, going to fewer movies, making fewer friendships and attachments, marrying less, and even dating far less. Faith Hill of The Atlantic calls it the "great romance slump".² The problem isn't declining box office revenue. It's that we're lonely and isolated. That's darkness. Among other things, darkness pulls us apart and isolates us. Darkness is real, and it matters.

At one time, you may have been in the darkness yourself.

What did darkness feel like for you? Was it a need to prove yourself to a world that never gave you its approval? Were you made to feel less than valuable and maybe even less than human? Was it ignorance of God's presence in the world or resentment that God hadn't done everything you wanted Him to do? Are you still in the darkness today? I don't ask that because I'm judging you. I hurt for you and want something better for you.

Isaiah points us to the reality of two kingdoms.

The New Testament names the darkness that Isaiah saw—it's the kingdom of this world. You could call it the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of Satan. That's the kingdom that we are all born into. But there is another Kingdom, the Kingdom of God and of Light. There are two kingdoms, two realms vying for our loyalty and fighting one another. Two and only two kingdoms. We belong to one or the other. Isaiah saw that the kingdom of darkness covers most of the earth, but the Kingdom of God is dawning, and that's the Kingdom that has triumphed in Jesus Christ and is going to win in the end.

Glory has dawned.

God promised that His glory would dawn over Zion.

Isaiah 60:2 goes on to say,

... but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

Think about Judah's story. They sinned, and God promised judgment. Eventually, Judah was conquered by the Babylonians and many people were exiled. It was like God had left His people. God also told the people that they would come home, and He would be with them again. But there is more going on here. God was promising Zion, the city of Jerusalem, that the future would bring His glory in

² <https://www.theatlantic.com/podcasts/2026/08/the-death-of-romance/688193/>

even bigger ways. Messiah would come. The Kingdom of God would come. New Creation would come. Zion would be the center of God's glory on earth.

God's glory has dawned on us in Jesus.

The ministry of the Suffering Servant is in the background in these verses. After the death and resurrection of the Suffering Servant, God's glory would come to His people in a more immediate way.

Isaiah 60:1 announces God's glory as an accomplished fact,

... for your light has come, and the glory of the LORDd has risen upon you.

That happened in part in Jesus. God's glory came into the world in Jesus. **John 1:14** says,

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father ...

Now because Jesus is God with us and the Holy Spirit is God within us, we are being bathed in that glory all the time. It can't help but bounce off us! But there is more to come.

God's glory will shine forever in New Creation.

When Jesus has returned and God makes all things new, **Revelation 21:23** says that we will bask in God's glory always,

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Glory is our destiny.

So, living on mission is never just one more thing to do.

You don't need to be on mission to earn God's favor or to prove your worth. Being on mission is no more of an obligation than eating or sleeping. It's as natural to a disciple of Jesus as breathing air or drinking water. Besides, God is always doing the hard work.

Nations are drawn.

What Isaiah described did not happen when the Exiles returned to Jerusalem.

Isaiah said that the world would change dramatically. **Isaiah 60:3** describes it,

And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

The darkened world will be drawn to God's glory dwelling among His people. They will respond by bringing their wealth as an offering of praise, Isaiah said. And he gave details in verses 4-7. That didn't happen when the Exiles returned, so Isaiah must have been pointing to something else. But what?

The Magi who showed up in Bethlehem started fulfilling Isaiah's vision.

When the nations come, **Isaiah 60:6** says,

... They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

When the glory of God came into the world in a new way when Jesus was born, Wise Men from the east came. These are representatives of the nations, and look what they brought. **Matthew 2:11** says,

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The nations have kept coming to Jesus ever since; we are the people of those nations, and we keep bringing Him our gifts.

This passage will be fulfilled finally and completely when Jesus returns.

There is still so much of Isaiah 60 that is yet to be fulfilled. But look at what **Revelation 21:24-26** says about the glory of God in New Jerusalem in New Creation,

By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it ... They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

God's glory shines like the noonday sun, the darkness is gone, and the nations are living in the light of God.

Have you ever come back to a campfire after getting something from the car in the dark?

You go to the car to get a blanket. You probably walk in the dark with just a flashlight. You open the car door, the light comes on inside, you find the blanket, then close the door. Suddenly, the light is gone and everything is darker than before. You turn toward the campfire, and the fire is brighter than ever. Suddenly, the darkness feels colder and almost threatening. But being near the fire feels safe, and you're drawn back to the fire. That's what Isaiah is saying will happen to many people walking in darkness when they see the light of God's glory in the world. God's glory is here, and it draws people in from the dark!

Arise, shine!

God commands us to shine.

Isaiah 60:1 starts with a roar,

Arise, shine ...

It's two quick commands. The first is the command to people who have been beaten down to get up. The second is a command to shine. God's glory has risen among us and bathes us in His Light. Again, **Isaiah 60:1** ends,

... for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

Now we reflect that glory out to the darkness like the moon on a cloudless night. It was a command to Zion to be who God made her to be. It's also a command to us to be who we are in Christ!

Tim and Fumi Routhier shone on their recent mission trip to Japan.

Fumi grew up in Japan, and Tim was stationed there as a Marine. Since Tim came to Christ, they both feel called to serve Jesus in Japan. This summer, they took their family back to Okinawa to explore what that would look like. While there, they had exciting chances to share Jesus. But sometimes our simple conversations become moments when God invades the everyday. Tim and Fumi were dropping off their daughter at daycare when someone called Tim's name. A woman recognized him and remembered how years earlier when he was a Marine, he had greeted her in Japanese. She shared with Tim and Fumi that she had gotten married and was moving to the United States to be with her husband. She was nervous about flying, nervous about going to the US, and nervous about leaving

behind everything she knew. They listened to her and encouraged her. She asked about faith, and Fumi got to share how her Christian faith is her strength. She and Fumi exchanged contact information and are still texting. Arise, shine! It's that simple.

Let's all be on mission.

It could be as simple as noticing the people around you and being open to hearing their stories; God may show you where He is working in that person's life. You could invite someone to join you for a meal; that's an opportunity to really open up your life and share it with someone else, and that is often the time when people become real and vulnerable and ready to listen. You might even invite someone to join you at an event here at Valley or to place their faith in Jesus.

This is our time to shine.

Isaiah spoke words rich with truth. He was speaking to people in his future who would be returning from Exile. He was also speaking to the people who would see the Messiah arrive in the first century. And he is speaking about the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns. But Isaiah is also speaking to us. He is saying something that is always true. God's glory shines on God's people, and it is meant to shine out into the darkness from us. Isaiah is speaking to this church in this moment. We do not want to miss this moment or this challenge! This is our time to light up the dark with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Valley has shone for 50 years, and we pray that we'll shine until Jesus returns.

Thousands of people have come through these doors over the decades. Thousands have come to Christ here. And hundreds of thousands have come to Christ around the world because of this church. The light of Christ has shone brightly here, and we will celebrate that next weekend. But we are not done yet! Until Jesus returns, we want His light to shine brightly on us, and we want to reflect that light brightly out to the world. We want to be "on mission" and to shine! Because that's who God made us to be.