

Isaiah 2:1-5

Promised

November 30, 2025

The Book of Isaiah begins with an invitation to reason, to a conversation about the state of things in the world of that time. The premise is that things were not well, and that it was the people, all the various peoples of the world, including Israel, who were responsible. Much of the prophet's description about *that* time is apropos in the present as well. The first chapter is a hard read.

From the very beginning of this great work of Israelite prophecy, there are alternatively mixed into the hard messages, a much more hopeful one. Today's reading is the first of the hopeful promises. Some of the language in it is familiar and appears also in other texts, in some of the other prophets, and in the New Testament.

For Instance, "they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." As a matter of fact, the whole of verses three and four appear verbatim in the fourth chapter of Micah. At the end of the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation, there is an affinity with the great vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth found in the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah.

The vision of a perfectly peaceful world has captured the human imagination like almost no other image. We can imagine what it might be like, but the sad reality is that we cannot attain it. The periods of domestic

tranquility that come and go in most places, come to be almost a kind of torture because they speak to us of what *might* be, if only things were better, if only we were better.

One day there will be peace, that is the promise, and it will not be because *we* suddenly get better, but because God will have decided to bring the life of the world to its fulfillment. This is good news because it means that the world is not left to its own resources, its own decision-making abilities, its own moral capacity, but to the grace of God, who acts on our behalf even as we stumble.

The themes for Advent each week are; hope, peace, joy, and love. One might suspect a reading about a peaceful world would fit better on the second Sunday, for which the theme of the day *is* peace. But the texts about peace and hope are often taken together, their meanings overlap, because the promise of peace in a world that has war and distress in it becomes a feature of the hope, a hope that builds in us over time, perhaps more sharply, in times of trouble.

We are able to channel our hope for peace into hope for other things; for plenty, for justice, for mercy, for love, for experiences of beauty and holiness. It is commonly known that people generally do not live as well when there is no hope, as when there is. Advent is the announcement, once and for all, that God is for us, and is for us in the Incarnation of Jesus, Christ for the world.

Over the last 2,000 years or so there have been times for many people, in which doubts about a better world have been stronger than their hope, not only because of the dire circumstances that sometimes take center stage in the world's life, and in our lives, but also because of the tendency to forget the gracious things promised. The observance of the first Sunday in the Advent season is meant to help us remember.

In view of the day, let us attempt a different strategy for the remembrance our hope . . . Instead of marking it in our minds that the promises had been fulfilled since the time of Jesus, and have been in retrograde, start from the premise that when the promises were made, the world was in a state of turmoil and trouble likened to or even greater than in the present times, *and it is moving towards its fulfillment.*

The promise was made to increase our faith and to forestall the darkness. It starts out small and grows. It is at its brightest when we are at our most vulnerable. We could say that it is an aspirational hope, but it is more real than that. The evidence is the good in the world. And there is good in the world.

I woke up this morning to find that the power and water are on, as they ordinarily are; the roads are open, there is food in the grocery stores. These are not true everywhere.

There are countless examples of good programs designed to allow people a chance to display the willingness to help.

One might think of the ministries supported by this church; locally we support PIN, Common Ground Free Store, Helpline, Turning Point, and Family Promise. We participate in larger national and international ministries such as the One Great Hour of Sharing, Samaritan's Purse, and Church World Service. And they are just the tip of the iceberg..

And there is the church itself . . . all of which is to say that there is a generosity among people and a desire to help that is rooted in love and compassion and kindness. *And since all good things come from God, we are forced to conclude that the world, for all its trouble, is filled up with the goodness of the Lord.*

Yet the troubles remain. The second chapter of Isaiah goes back to the time after the Assyrian invasion brought down the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Babylonian captivity was waiting its brief turn on the stage of history. Prophets like Isaiah were forced to look for hope in ways that went beyond the relative success or failure of their nation, or other nations on the world stage.

“The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,” begins the 24th psalm. That was a statement of faith, a kind of discovery made *in the difficult times*. But there is more. For the prophets and those to whom they spoke held fast to the promise of the heavenly age which was then and is now still ahead.

Every goodness, every kindness, every healing, every temporary ceasefire, every problem solved, every

reconciliation, is a marker of the things promised. Look around and see even the smallest of the good things with which the Lord has blessed us.

And then believe. Faith gives us the eyes to see the beauty and richness of God's grace. And from that perspective, we are meant to see the birth of Jesus, God's Son, into history, as the greatest good thing of all. We can hear the great spiritual discoveries made by the people who suffered the most.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind"

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

"Be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other, as in Christ, God has forgiven you."

"Trust the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge God, and God will direct your path."

In them we hear ideas that were forged in the crucible of adversity, in which people learned to be better persons in spite of the pain.

The Book of Isaiah is an invitation to reason, to a conversation about the state of things in the world. The premise is that the presence of God for us means

that in spite of whatever evidence to the contrary is before us, *things are going well*. It is the Grace of God that is responsible. Thus the hope.

And finally, we can hear again, the way Paul concluded his Letter to the Romans 13:11-14 -

"Besides this you know what hour it is, the hour has already come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light . . . put on the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

Matthew 19:16-30

16 And behold, one came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?”

17 And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” 18 He said to him, “Which?” And Jesus said, “You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, 19 Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

20 The young man said to him, “All these I have observed; what do I still lack?” 21 Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” 22 When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 25 When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” 26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” 27 Then Peter said in reply, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?” 28 Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the

twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. 30 But many that are first will be last, and the last first.

Mark 10:17-31

17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” 20 And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.” 21 And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” 22 At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “[“Then who can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible,

but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”
28 Peter began to say to him, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many that are first will be last, and the last first.”

Luke 18:18-30

18 And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” 21 And he said, “All these I have observed from my youth.” 22 And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” 23 But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. 24 Jesus looking at him said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” 27 But he said, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.” 28 And Peter said, “Lo, we have left our homes

and followed you.” 29 And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

[Back](#)

[Home](#)