

Isaiah 11:1-10 A Vision of Peace  
December 7, 2025

When I was in junior and senior high school, each summer the youth of our church would pack up an old school bus and make our way down to the Lake of the Ozarks to a place called Windermere, which was a baptist campground owned and operated by the Missouri Baptist Convention.

It was a beautiful place and there was much to do. There was the lake, of course, and all that one can do on a lake, and sports; basketball, volleyball, tennis, and there was a tug-of-war competition with a mud pit between the two teams.

They brought in musicians and a preacher and had a big worship service every night. There were high pressure altar calls (I didn't like part of it much). There were people from upwards of about 50 churches there, and one could get to know other baptists from all around. There was a cafeteria where the food was okay but the fellowship was great.

I remember that the people who worked at Windermere did not like youth week, because 700 or so teenagers did more damage than any of the other groups and left a bigger mess. They had youth camp on the last week before Labor Day, because that would give them time to get things back in order before the fall activities began later in September.

Towards the end, the schools started moving the first day of school back into August. Fewer people came. A few years back it was put into foreclosure.

No matter what else, it was exciting to be there and everyone came back refreshed and ready for school. It was usually, by someone, referred to as, "a mountaintop experience. A few weeks later the luster had been worn away by everyday life and the demands of school, we all looked forward to the next year.

Many of the world's most well-known retreat centers are up in mountain regions or on lakes somewhere, such as Green Lake in Wisconsin, a well-known American Baptist resort and meeting center.

One of the ideas associated with *Jerusalem* is that its purpose is to be less a political center than a spiritual one, less known as a nation's capitol than a nation of priests, less an executive building than a temple, a place where the people of the world can gather to be refreshed, and to learn the ways of the Lord, and go away ready and excited to live a higher calling, a better life than before.

Even the name is a suggestive. By the time the Judeans got a hold of it the word, "Salem," which means peace, had become a part of its name. In literal terms, it means, a foundation of peace," or, "vision of peace." Either way it is a holy dream, and the promise is that one day it will come true.

It is a common mindset that work is done and sacrifices are made, in order to achieve a goal or be rewarded in some way. It is naive to claim there is no truth to this understanding. One works and then gets paid. Yet the Gospel mindset is precisely the opposite; something has happened or been announced, or both, thus the call to work and sacrifice.

“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near” is the way John the Baptist put it, and later Jesus came along and said the same thing. God has taken decisive action on our behalf. It is a call to being and doing. But what kind of being, and what kind of action?

As an answer we must first begin with an accounting of what God has done. Beginning with Creation, God has brought forth the universe and given life in all its forms to the world. God has placed human beings in it and given them commands and promises so they can enjoy all its beauty and produce and goodness.

When people rebelled against God, meaning, against the life they had been given, had refused to live it under God’s terms, God promised to call them back, and offered them the possibility that includes not only their *salvation*, but their *transformation*. The most decisive act was the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, God’s only Son, the gift. What has God done? In a word, Christ Jesus is what God has done.

It is when we understand the significance of the coming of Christ that new meaning is added to our

lives. Of course, in great prophetic fashion, it all comes with warnings. One does not have to go on too much about what the failure to accept and appreciate a gift means, especially in this case.

Among the responses to the coming of Jesus is not only its rejection or the ignoring of it, but also the attempt to earn the gift already given, which only leads to futility. Seeking to earn a gift is a way of rejecting it.

Yet far more significant is its acceptance. Although there is nothing one can do to earn it, it does lay a claim on us; and the best way to accept it is through joyous, and thankful, and obedient faith. We become better people, and do better things.

Among other things, the result is peace, both inner and outer. The Advent reading came from the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, mostly the first half of the chapter. We learn that, “the scattered pieces (of Israel) will be gathered together. And it will happen in a way that brings all the nations, or peoples, together as well.

The vision is of a great mountain sanctuary in the temple city of Jerusalem, where the people of the world will gather and find peace. It will be a kind of Windermere or Green Lake, only much more.

The promise of peace has yet to overtake the world. It *has been* established by God in Christ, through the arrival of Jesus into history, his sacrifice on the cross, and his resurrection. We now live in the time between

that resurrection and his return, the time between the gift given and its promised fulfillment.

We play out this biblical timeline each time we work our way through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week and Easter, and Pentecost.

This way of giving a theological meaning to the calendar year, may seem artificial, but it can hardly be worse than not doing it. It is meant to help us see God's providential care; that we are not only gloriously made, but cared for and loved and forgiven.

Let me enlist the help of Paul who wrote in 2 Corinthian 5, "If anyone is in Christ, that person is a New Being, the old is gone, the new has come."

And the nature of this new way of being is described in Galatians as, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." And all their corresponding actions.

And as long as Paul is helping this morning, let him have the closing statement:

"May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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