

Theme: Come Walk in the light of God

Text: Isaiah 2:1- 5

Date: November 27, 2016

Season: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you walk in the light of God, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It's hard to believe that today we're begin a new church year once again, my how time flies! I don't know about you, but over the years I have come to love the season of Advent. I love it because it's an exciting season — exciting because us adults love to watch the excitement, especially among the young children as they wait rather impatiently for Christmas to come. I also love Advent because it's a season of the church year that keeps our feet grounded in the here-and-now and yet moves us into a fast-forward to the conclusion of all history. Advent is a season that invites us to think seriously about the meaning of time and how we use it. Time is a precious gift from God, which gives us the opportunity to live as people of hope, peace, joy and love, which are the themes of the four Sundays of Advent. I hope you are walking in the light of God this Advent season as we look at the hope, peace, joy and love given to us by God.

Today our Old Testament reading, from the prophet Isaiah, is a visit to one of the most hope-filled passages of the Bible. Indeed, maybe we should have stood up when it was read, like we do for the Gospel lesson, for this passage from Isaiah is full of the Gospel-hope! The situation at the time Isaiah wrote this prophecy of hope was a rather somber one. The superpower Assyrian army had successfully invaded and occupied the Northern kingdom of Israel, Judah the Southern kingdom was feels very vulnerable and threatened by the Assyrians. There appears to have been some in Judah who were advising the rulers of Judah to form an alliance with Egypt, to ensure their political and military security against the Assyrians. However, Isaiah opposed such an alliance with Egypt. and He advised Judah to remain on their own and rely solely upon the LORD God, who would protect and preserve His chosen people if they remained faithful to Him, by keeping His covenant. In the midst of this anxiety and despair, Isaiah preached a vision of a much brighter, more hopeful future.

Our world hasn't changed much since the days of Isaiah. Nations, especially superpowers, threaten to dominate the world by calling all the shots militarily and

politically—holding the poorer, smaller nations in captivity. Smaller nations still feel vulnerable politically and militarily, just like Judah did in ancient times. It is precisely in this situation of anxiety and despair that a vision of hope is required to remind us of our deepest need to place all of our trust and security in the LORD our God. Isaiah is correct; our ultimate hope is in the LORD our God, NOT in trusting in our military or political security.

Isaiah provides us with clues as to what this hope in the LORD God looks like, as he tells us, **“It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, [3] and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.** (Is. 2:2-3)

Mt Mariah was the tallest mountain in the area and King Solomon built the temple of Jerusalem upon it. In the time of King David and King Solomon nations from all around came flowing to Jerusalem to learn about this mighty God that the people of God, the Israelites, were protect by. The people of other nations saw and heard about how God was protecting and fought for the Israelites. The people of God came flowing to hear the Words of God 1,000 years later, when Jesus walked on the hills of this earth teaching God’s ways to the world. Why when Jesus was just born we hear this said about Him by the Angles and shepherds; **‘And the angel said to the shepherds, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”**

**<sup>15</sup> When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> And they went with haste and found Mary**

**and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup> And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.'** (Lk 2:10-18)

The highest mountain that brings us to God is His Church, where His Word is taught in all its truth and purity, for there we are told the ways to be God's people through His law and we are told about all that God has done for us so that we can be His people for all eternity through His Gospel. These are the Words of God that bring peace to all who hear them and let them go to work in their lives. Yes, in the latter days of Jesus the people were flowing to Jesus just as the shepherd did and saying, "Let us go to hear the Word of the Lord so the we may know His ways and live in the peace and love that He has given to us!"

Think of that! All of our longings and yearnings after the truth; all of our living with mysteries in our lives shall be revealed when our Messiah, Jesus, comes to bring all of history to its fulfillment. All of our questions shall either be answered or shall no longer be necessary to ask. No more stumbling along in the darkness; no more living with doubts and ambiguities; all shall be revealed! That's the peace we begin to see as we come to His Church and let His Word go to work in our lives.

In this hope-filled future where Christ shall teach and reveal all things to us; Isaiah goes on to state another role that our Messiah shall play as he says, **He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples.** (Is. 2:4a) In all of the political, military, social and economic complexities of this world—thank God that there shall be a spiritual presence and solution to everything! Nations and peoples that continue to remain divided and at war with each other throughout history shall, in the future, be gathered together in the presence of the Messiah who will judge and arbitrate fairly, justly, with love and mercy for everyone. Isaiah then in the same breath, proclaims one of the most popular phrases of all—which is filled with Gospel hope and promise. **"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."** (Is. 2:4b) In other words, war shall become obsolete! It shall no longer exist, it shall be "unlearned" by all people, and weapons of destruction shall be turned into tools for life and peace. Although organizations such as the United Nations and others have been

formed, along with faithful Jews and Christians inspired by Isaiah's words; nonetheless we have still not been able to live up to these words on an international level. The world seems to be an ever increasingly violent and hopeless place in which to live. Peace in places like the Middle East seem like a naïve pipe dream. Should we remain hopeful, even though the daily news would rather we live in despair and cynicism? Isaiah's answer to all this turmoil is a resounding YES! Then he goes on to give a prayer of hope as he says, "**O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.**" (Is. 2:5)

Tom lived in a house that was right next to a small old cemetery. Tom's bus stop was at the corner of the cemetery. All the other children in his housing development walked along the sidewalk running along the sides of the cemetery to the bus stop, but Tom walk on the paths that ran through the middle of the cemetery to bring him to the other side and to his house. In the winter when Tom headed for the bus stop and when Tom got off the bus after school it was completely dark. His friends and the bus driver asked Tom over and over again, "Aren't you scared of walking through a cemetery in the dark?" "No," Tom would say with a smile, "Because I'm not looking at the darkness I'm just looking at the light shining from the window of my home."

Where is the home that shines the light of hope for you? There is much in this world today to convince us not to have hope for the future. Yet, as people of faith, we are given a glimpse of God's "Master Plan" for our future filled with hope. In the little details of our daily living, we are invited to be about the business of bringing seeds of hope to the world by shining the light of God's Word to others. The world and the Church that God loves so much was, is, and ever shall be in God's most capable hands for shining light in the darkness of this world. God and his Messiah Jesus shall one day fulfill the wonderful prophecy of hope that Isaiah proclaimed so long ago. May we as a people of faith keep proclaiming and living God's message of hope for ourselves and the whole world so that others may come to see the light of their home in heaven prepare for them by the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.