

## Isaiah 2:1-5

2 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2

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 forth the law,<sup>[a]</sup>  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4

He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;  
and 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.

5

O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the Lord.

The season of Advent is upon us, the season where we remember the long wait for the Messiah, and join our ancestors spiritually in waiting for the Christ child, and look forward to the day when Christ will come again. Each week we light a candle, symbolizing hope, peace, joy and love, until we finally celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas.

This week we light the hope candle, and remember and reflect on the hope that rested on Christ, the hope that he brought to us, and the hope we still maintain as we look forward to the day when all things will be made right. We reflect upon the hope of the Christmas story this morning.

We tend to think of the Christmas story as beginning with Mary and Joseph. This is no surprise. The New Testament essentially begins with the birth of life of Christ, aside from a quick prologue of genealogy which most people skim through, if they've read it at all. To be sure, there is plenty of hope in just that part of the story, but to fully understand the hope of our spiritual ancestors, we must go much further back.

We must go to Eve, the mother of all humans, who, along with her husband Adam, saw the glory of God and sinned anyway. They watched as the perfect and innocent world they knew was quickly corrupted by the curse. The once gentle animals were now enemies. The earth no longer offered an abundance of fruits and vegetables. Once innocent gardeners, the first couple now sowed the fields with their sweat and tears, their once perfect relationship now marred by the pride and selfishness that had crept into their souls with that first sin.

And yet. God did not abandon them. God promised them hope, especially to Eve, to whom was promised a son who would crush the head of the serpent and break the curse her sins had brought upon the earth. The only woman to ever know this world as it was intended, the woman who had known such suffering, was given an unimaginable hope. Though she would not live to see it, she hoped in the coming messiah, and passed this hope on to her children.

The Christmas story continued, and let us pick it up again two thousand years later. We find a childless shepherd, who at the age of 75 is called by God to leave all he has ever know and to move his family into a land that would be revealed to him. But all the land and wealth in the world could not make up for the ache in Abraham and Sarah's life. They desired a child, an heir, but it seemed that Sarai was well beyond that hope, and after all, in a decade she had never conceived.

And yet. God promises Abraham a son, the long-desired son, but still. Through this son, all the generations would be blessed. This son would carry on the promise given to Eve, which now would live inside Abraham and Sarah. Through this son, the hope and promise would continue. A son, Isaac was born, and so the hope lived on.

Centuries passed and still the people hoped, but their hope took on the desperation of a people oppressed. Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt, their very children murdered, tormented by cruel slave masters and forced to build monuments to strange and false gods. The cry of the people was great.

And yet. A baby boy is placed in a basket on the Nile because entrusting him to God is better than the Egyptians discovering him. This child, Moses, would deliver the people from Pharaoh and bring them into a new land. Moses would walk with God in a unique way, and deliver God's law to the people. It is this very law that the savior would fulfill. Through Moses the people would begin to learn the devastation of sin upon their souls and their relationship with God, and also of God's great mercy and love. Moses would lead them to the land which would be the kingdom of the savior. The people saved, blessed with the land and with the law, and so the great hope, and the Christmas story, continued.

It continued for fifteen hundred more years. It continued when God promised the great Israelite King David that When his days were over and he rested with his ancestors, God would raise up his offspring to succeed him, and this offspring would be the one who will build a house for God's name, and God would establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

It continued when the prophet Micah spoke saying out of Bethlehem would come one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

It continued when God spoke through Jeremiah promising that God would make a new, unbreakable covenant, and would put God's law in their hearts and minds, and finally the people would be God's people and all would know God.

It continued through the words of Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea and Joel. It was promised again by Haggai and Zechariah and Malachi. And it was perhaps it was preserved the most through the prophet Isaiah who prophesied that 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, 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." He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and 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.

Today, we light the candle of hope in preparation for Christmas, but let us not forget the weight of that hope, let us not forget how each one of our ancestors carried it for us, beginning with Eve, all the way down to a teenaged virgin named Mary, who had long been taught the promises of the messiah, but never imagined that she would hold that very hope in her womb. We have received a gift from our ancestors, the hope they imparted to each new generation until the moment arrived. This season we join with them spiritually, remembering their hope until the blessed morning the Savior is born. We also take our place now in this sacred and unbroken chain, and pass on a different hope, the hope and promise of Jesus' eventual return. In this sacred pause, both hopes and both long waits are united. May we give thanks to all those before who kept hope alive, who believed in the promises of God, and may we share their same courage and faithfulness in imparting that hope to others this season. And may we gladly walk in the light of the Lord.

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November 27, 2022