

Jesus Our Coming Hope

By Mark Jarvinen

The Mountain of the LORD

2 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

³ Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

⁵ Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD (Isaiah 2:1-5).

Today is the 1st Sunday of Advent and our theme is HOPE. What is hope? Emily Dickenson, the 19th century poet, puts it this way:

***"Hope" is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops – at all."***

(Written in 1861, published posthumously in 1891 in Poems by Emily Dickenson, Second Series)

For too many people today the bird of hope no longer inspires, it has stopped its singing. Too many life crises have robbed people of their song (their hope). The same was true in Isaiah's day. It was a critical time in Israel's history. The Assyrian Empire was on the

rampage. War and conflict abounded with Israel caught in the middle. People's hearts had turned away from God, and idol worship, superstitions, and rebelliousness were on the rise. People were indifferent to spiritual truth. If ever God's people needed a renewal of **HOPE** it was then.

Enter Isaiah, with his message of **HOPE**, in the face of the Assyrian threat. It was the period between the relative prosperity of King Uzziah and the reforms of King Hezekiah. The people needed God and the peace that only He could bring.

Interestingly, the words of our text weren't limited to the immediate threat of Assyria toward Israel (the northern kingdom) as events were unfolding in approximately **740 B.C.**, nor were Isaiah's words limited to the future vulnerability of Judah (the southern kingdom) and its capital city, Jerusalem, which ultimately fell to Babylon in **586 B.C.** some 150 years later. Rather, when **Isaiah 2:1** says, ***"This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem,"*** the prophet was looking even further down the path of history to what we call ***"the last days,"*** (v. 2), which began with the first coming of Jesus Christ at His birth, but were to culminate even later in history, at King Jesus' second coming in greatness and glory to establish what even we would call ***"his future Kingdom."*** These words of prophecy were intended to provide at least a ray of **HOPE** for Israel during Isaiah's day, saying to them, ***"things won't always be the way they are now."*** But for us, who already know about Jesus' first coming, Isaiah's prophecy in today's text speaks even more powerfully to us as we await Christ's second coming. This is our

ultimate blessed **HOPE** – the promise toward which Scripture undeniably points.

Let's see how today's text speaks to us in the last days about **HOPE**:

1. **MOUNTAIN** - In v. 2 we read of “... *the mountain of the Lord's temple*” To the Jews in Isaiah's day, the term “*mountain*” was significant, referring to **the site on which the temple in Jerusalem was built**. This is where God's presence was believed to dwell and was the center of worship. **Psalm 68:16** says of the mountain of the Lord:

“Why gaze in envy, O rugged mountains, at the mountain where God chooses to reign, where the Lord himself will dwell forever.”

Furthermore, the text says that this “*mountain of the Lord's temple will be established*” The word “*established*” means “*made firm or secure,*” and since it is a future reference in Isaiah (“*will be established*”), it speaks to a confident **HOPE** – something that is sure to come.

This means **we too have a hopeful future**. Yes, Christ came in human form to die for our sins and to offer eternal life for all who believe in Him. Yet, there is still a future aspect to our salvation. We too still live in **HOPE**. We await the coming Kingdom of Christ, the culmination of the last days. I'm reminded of **Hebrews 6:19**, which says, “***We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.***” In other words, with Christ's finished work on the cross already an accomplished fact, we now live in the **HOPE** of His

promised second coming Kingdom today. This **HOPE**, according to **Hebrews 6** is an *“anchor for our souls,”* which holds us in place when the storms of life assail us, threatening to cast us adrift in the churning seas of doubt and despair.

2. JERUSALEM - Next, we read of the city of Jerusalem in today’s text. As the center of worship, the place where God’s presence was said to dwell, it is a city that can’t be hidden. As such, *“Many peoples (Jew and Gentile) will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob’” (v. 3).* This is a prophecy that stretches out over hundreds of years. It is still being fulfilled today. Isaiah is saying to his contemporaries, *“You don’t see it now, things look very dark and desolate – but don’t give up HOPE!”* Isaiah spoke of a great and future day when Messiah would come and salvation would be available to all people – **Jew and Gentile** - which as NT believers, we know to be a present reality. The last part of **v. 2** says about the mountain of the Lord, *“... and all nations will stream to it.”* In other words, they won’t feel coerced or pressured – they will just **WANT** to come. In the last days, as the Gospel is proclaimed, hearts will be drawn to Christ in a desire to worship. **This is already being fulfilled.** Over my years as pastor at CoJ, I’ve heard visitors to our church marvel at how people seemed to want to be here at CoJ, i.e. visiting after church instead of making a bee-line for the door.

3. LEARN & WALK - The reason that all nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord is that they will want to **LEARN** of God’s ways and then **WALK** in them – to make God’s ways their lifestyle. In **v. 3**,

there is a portend of the Gospel going out, even from this OT prophecy. It says -

“The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

It is through the Word of the Lord going out that God’s ways become people’s lifestyle, as it is both **believed** and **obeyed**. Isaiah, the prophet, saw a day when converts would stream into Jerusalem in great numbers and follow God’s ways. Commentator, **Matthew Henry**, suggests that even though Isaiah would have only known of the law of Moses issued at Mt. Sinai, as the word of the Lord going out from Jerusalem, the Gospel is also a **“law of faith”** which Christ’s disciples preached from the Temple in Jerusalem after His ascension to the Father (**Acts 5:20**). Thus, in this way, the Gospel Church was established in Jerusalem, and the Gospel would again be proclaimed in Jerusalem at the culmination of the last days (**Henry, p.829**).

4. KINGDOM - Finally, perhaps the most wondrous thing of all spoken by Isaiah in today’s text is revealed in v. 4, which says:

“He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

I wonder how this prophecy was received by its original hearers? Can’t you imagine them saying, ***“This will never happen. Isaiah must be dreaming. There have always been wars and fighting in the world. Things will never change.”*** How do you receive the words of Isaiah’s prophecy today? Do we receive Isaiah’s words with a certain amount of doubt, or do they inspire hope in us?

It's hard to hang on to **HOPE**, isn't it? It's easy to think, "**It is what it is, nothing will ever change.**" My health will never improve, my job situation will never get better, my family will never change. We feel that Emily Dickenson's bird of hope will never sing again.

APPLICATION

The Advent season has begun. There's a message of hope for us today, just as there was in Isaiah's day. **Salvation has come in the first advent of Christ – even though there's more to come.** The presence of God is already in our world – but it's not yet complete since we still see wars and strife. The Holy Spirit has come to dwell within us and lead us in the truth, even though there are days that still seem dark and hopeless.

Where do we turn for our HOPE today? So many try to manufacture **HOPE** during the holidays, just like in a Hallmark movie, by keeping the traditions of the season, – the colorful lights, the trimmed trees, numerous holiday events, packages under the tree, feasts on our tables. We try to recapture memories from our childhood, or recapture a romance from our youth now grown cold. We want to relive a time when days seemed less stressful, or those golden years when our children were younger, when things were simpler and we got along better or seemed closer than perhaps we do today. There's so many unfulfilled promises for a better future, both for our nation and for us as individuals – where do we turn?

Do we turn to the **United Nations**? After 74 years of existence, the U.N. has sought to manage affairs in Korea, Vietnam, the Cold

War, the Gulf War, Bosnia, Rwanda, civil wars in Central America, Iraq, 9/11, and Afghanistan to name a few. We're still waiting for the day when nations will no longer ***"train for war."*** **There's been so much futility over the years, but we must still turn to Scripture, which is filled with promises that despite the trauma and tragedies of life, God is still working.** The message of the Bible is that no situation is without **HOPE**. Isaiah's message is still for us. There is a day coming in which:

- 1. God's presence will be ultimately established.***
- 2. People from all nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord.***
- 3. People from all nations will both hear the Word of the Lord and obey it.***
- 4. Conflict and wars will cease.***
- 5. Destructive weapons will be turned into instruments of peace.***

So in the meantime, remember **Romans 12:12** –

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful," even while times are tough. If you are **out of a job**, know that God knows the details. Trust Him and wait for an answer. Perhaps your **health** is failing – trust God even though the pain persists. Your **children or grandchildren** may seem far from God, (or from you), but remember that God is good at working behind the scenes. When **HOPE** isn't pouring forth by the ton, hang on to the sliver of **HOPE** you do have. God doesn't promise perpetual smooth sailing in life, but He does promise that He'll never fail us nor forsake us. **Isaiah 2:5**, the final verse of our text, is an excellent admonition with which to conclude: ***"Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord."*** Remember, Jesus said, ***"I am the light of the world."*** Walk in His light and live in His **HOPE**. ***A-men.***