

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah 65:17-25

For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice for ever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.
No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.
They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
They shall not labour in vain,
or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—
and their descendants as well.
Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Reflection

This past week, I attended a local needs assessment meeting. To explain the purpose of the conversation, the facilitator shared a photo of kids enjoying ice cream. We agreed that it would be wonderful to have a world where everyone could enjoy ice cream whenever and however it made sense for each person. As a photo of a child with an empty cone was shown, we also acknowledged that we currently don't live in such a world. The meeting was an opportunity to explore what barriers exist that enable us to go from our current situation to the world we envision.

What kind of world do we want? I'm not being rhetorical today. I want to hear your thoughts? What would be the characteristics of an ideal world for you?

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What kind of world do we want? How we answer that question can say a lot about our priorities, perspectives, and place in this world. Thinking back on the specific ideas and thoughts that came to mind, how many were focused on what would make this world better for us? Who is not represented in that 'us'? What voices, issues, and struggles did we miss in our visioning? If we got the world we described, who might still be left without ice cream?

Through the prophet Isaiah, God says: For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. What kind of world do we think God wants? There are certainly some powerful images raised in this passage – about planting and reaping, about growing old, about lions eating straw, all of which lead to the final statement: They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. In God's world, all have a place where they are safe and able to live fully. Young and old, those who are gender diverse, those who are racialized, those with disabilities, those who are different...all have a place and meaningful opportunities to share their gifts with the world!

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. In God's world, prejudice, injustice, poverty, violence, war, and environmental degradation, all fall away leaving space from which everyone in the world

truly respects the dignity of every human being and values the wisdom of Creation.

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. In God's world, as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, love is the answer. Love is the answer to the most profound questions of life.

What kind of world should we want? One in which love reigns. Love for God, love of God's Beloved Children, love for Creation. When we answer with love, we seek to remove those things which would hurt or destroy. When we answer with love, we seek ways to lift up those left on the margins. When we answer with love, everyone gets ice cream whenever and however they want. When we choose to embody the love God reveals in Scripture, we engage in practices that hint at the wonder and grace of the Kingdom of God.

What kind of world do we want? To what extent does our desire for seeing this world made new reflect God's desires for our world? What more can we do to help our world move closer to God's dream for us? In our desire to serve God's purpose for this world, let us pray as we sing together 434 The Love of Jesus Calls Us.