

Seeing the word, walking in the light.

Bible reference for sermon- Isaiah 2:1–5

In days to come

*the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.*

Grace to you, and peace, in the name of the One who comes—Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The church year begins not with a whisper but with a vision. Not with gentle poetry or nostalgic remembrance, but with a prophet standing on a mountain, eyes wide open, telling us that he sees the word of the Lord. Isaiah does not say, “Here is what I heard.”



He says, “This is what I saw.”

It is a dangerous thing when the people of God begin to see the word—when we see not only the surface of things, not only the world as it presently is, but reality at its depth. Isaiah invites us into “a seeing beyond seeing,” a holy perception in which God reveals what is possible when human imagination is exhausted and human effort is spent.

We come to this Advent carrying many things: relief that the year is nearly done; private anxieties that we don't always admit; hopes we hardly dare touch; disappointments that linger; worries about the future of those we love. Into this mixture of realism and longing, Isaiah places a shimmering vision. Not a fantasy. Not escapism. A word-become-picture that points us toward God's future.

Isaiah insists that God's word does not drift idly through the world like mist across a paddock. God's word accomplishes what it promises. God's word becomes deed. “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” When Isaiah sees the word, he sees a future already forming, God's promise already rising over the horizon.

Advent begins with that vision because, without it, the future would be a repetition of the past. Without God's promise, nothing truly new could come.

Isaiah takes us up a mountain. Not a mountain of power games or prestige, but the holy mountain where God's presence dwells. In Isaiah's vision, this mountain is raised above all others—not as a monument to human achievement but as the place where all humanity discovers again its need for instruction from the living God.

"All nations shall stream to it," he says. A river flowing uphill. People, diverse in language, culture, and story, moving together toward a single source of wisdom and renewal. They come not to conquer but to learn. Not to dominate but to walk in God's ways.

"Teach us your paths," they cry. "Guide us."



Isaiah paints a picture that breaks open the boundaries of his own time. He lived in the shadow of the Assyrian Empire, a world of siege and fear, a world in which Judah was threatened and Jerusalem trembled. Yet he sees beyond all of that. He sees enemies turning to become fellow pilgrims. He sees those who once threatened becoming those who now seek God's wisdom.

This is not naïve idealism.

It is prophetic trust.

Isaiah sees that human beings, at our core, are starved for true guidance. Tired of faulty directions and empty promises. Hungry for a word that shapes the world toward life, not death.

And so the nations stream toward the mountain—not to escape life on earth, but to learn how to live it faithfully.



At the heart of Isaiah's vision is one of the most striking images in Scripture:

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

This promise is breathtaking because of when and where it was spoken. Isaiah's world was full of violence, just as ours is. Even here, where we may live far from global front lines, we know the wounds that conflict inflicts—within families, within communities, and within our own internal lives.

The weapons we carry are not always metal. Sometimes they are words that cut, patterns that wound, structures that oppress, habits that harden the heart.

Isaiah announces a divine transformation: not simply the stopping of violence, but the conversion of violence into nourishment. Tools that once tore life down become tools that build life up. The economy of fear becomes an economy of flourishing.

When God judges among the nations—when inequities are addressed, when grievances are heard, when justice is done—there is no need for weapons anymore. Peace becomes practical, lived, embodied. Isaiah’s vision is not sentimental. It is material. Metal is reshaped. Tools are repurposed. Communities are replanted. This is what the reign of God looks like in the physical world.

At this time of year, our larger culture often presents images designed to evoke longing: perfect gatherings, perfect homes, perfect relationships, perfect serenity. Some of these images are harmless enough, but they do not satisfy the deeper hunger in us. They skate along the surface of our yearning without touching the ache beneath. We arrive at Advent carrying both yearning and disappointment. Some of us carry the sting of fractured relationships, the grief of loss, the anxiety of uncertainty. Some look toward Christmas with heaviness, feeling the gap between what is promised and what they experience.

Isaiah does not ignore the gap. He names it. He speaks of God’s future in the midst of a present that feels hopeless. Isaiah does not pretend the current world is peaceful. He does not deny the reality of war, conflict, exploitation, or fear. He simply refuses to give these the final word.

And that is where the courage of Advent lies. Advent is not about pretending the world is fine. Advent is about standing in the world as it is—fragile, fraught, unjust—and seeing the promise that God is at work, even now, reshaping its destiny.

Isaiah’s vision might sound impossible. That’s understandable. Advent always proposes impossibilities. A virgin conceives. God becomes flesh. Light breaks into the deepest dark. Peace enters a world trained for war. All of it seems improbable until it happens.

But impossibility is not a barrier for God. It is the setting in which God does God’s best work.



After unveiling a future in which nations stream to God and weapons become farming tools, Isaiah turns to his own people—and to us—and says:

“O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!”

Notice the shift. The prophet does not say, “Wait until the world is fixed.” He says, “Walk now.” Live toward the vision, even when you cannot fully see it. Live as if God’s peace is possible. Live as if God’s justice is real. Live as if the light already shines. I think is the quiet, steady power of the Advent season.

Advent does not ask us to manufacture hope. Advent asks us to notice the light God has already placed before us and to take the next faithful step toward it.

Walking in the light might look like:

- choosing forgiveness in a relationship that feels strained,
- refusing to speak words that deepen conflict,
- advocating for justice where systems favour the powerful,
- giving generously in a world that trains us to hoard,
- creating community in a culture of isolation.

These are small acts. Often unseen. Frequently uncelebrated. But they are steps toward the mountain of the Lord.

- They are the first strokes of hammer against metal.
- The first notes in a song of peace.
- The first glimmers of a world remade by God’s light.

As we begin Advent, Isaiah sets before us a vision that holds together justice and hope, judgment and promise, critique and consolation. It is not a vision created by human optimism but revealed by God to a prophet who dared to look with holy eyes.

Isaiah tells us:

- God’s presence will be unmistakable.
- God’s wisdom will draw all people.
- God’s judgment will produce justice.
- God’s justice will produce peace.
- God’s peace will transform the very tools of our lives.

This is not a distant dream. It is God’s promised future. A future already breaking into the present in Christ. A future that took on flesh in Bethlehem. A future the Spirit is labouring to bring forth even now.

Isaiah invites us not simply to admire this vision but to live toward it.

- To be a people who expect God to act.
- To be a community that practices peace.
- To be disciples who trust that God’s promise can reshape what seems immovable.

And so on this first Sunday of Advent, when the year turns and the church begins again, we are given the same invitation Isaiah gave his people:

Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

- Walk—not because the world is already peaceful but because the world needs people committed to peace.
- Walk—not because the mountain is yet in sight but because its promise is sure.
- Walk—not because the darkness has vanished but because a single candle has been lit, and its flame cannot be overcome.

Advent begins with a vision.

And Advent begins with a step.

May we take it together, trusting the God who reveals the word, the God who acts in promise, the God whose light leads us toward a transformed world.

Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>