

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**First Sunday in Advent, November 27, 2011**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 55, 343:1, 56, 415:1-4, 50.

Lessons: Micah 4:1-3, Romans 13:9-14, Matthew 24:37-44.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 2:1-5.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Ever since Adam and Eve first sinned, mankind has been seeking or looking for some kind of relief from the results of that original, inherited sin and from all their own actual sins in thought, word, and deed which follow as a result of that first sin.

God promised that relief as a Savior who would be born of a woman. Throughout the Old Testament God kept dropping hints, clues and promises – we call them prophecies – spoken and written by men whom God called prophets who told other men God’s Words. It was not until Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of a virgin called Mary who was betrothed to a man named Joseph that this Savior came into the world to do his God-ordained work.

The book of Isaiah is a series of prophecies. Our sermon text introduces a section that goes to the end of chapter 4. The prophet wrote by inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, and we must pay attention to his Words because they come from God. In this section God focused Isaiah’s attention and our attention on what wonderful things he had in store for the people of the tribe of Judah and for the citizens of Jerusalem – and really, for all believers.

**WHEN GOD TEACHES US HIS WAYS, WE WALK IN HIS PATHS.**

- 1. In Advent, we look especially at God’s promises of the coming Savior.**
- 2. God’s people witness and invite others to come to Christ.**
- 3. Christ brings peace with God and offers it to all men.**

Here you have another beautiful promise of God for his people in the future. When Isaiah speaks of the last days, he looks ahead to the New Testament era. When Isaiah talked about “the last days” these word pictures included the coming of the Messiah and the final judgment of all people. The first coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the beginning of that New Testament era and the beginning of the end of the Old Testament era. We are living in the New Testament era. For us the last days include the final judgment, Christ’s second coming, because the Messiah has already come to redeem mankind.

Today is the celebration of the beginning of the Advent season, which prepares for the celebration of the coming of Christ. Remember that Christ came once into the world in great humility, born in Bethlehem in the nation of Judah in a stable and that he promises to come again – on the last day to judge the living and the dead. First of all, at this time of the year, we are preparing for the coming of Christ at the time we call Christmas. It is so easy to lose track of the real meaning of Christmas when we are bombarded with invitations, requests, pleas – I am talking about advertising – telling us to buy, buy, buy. The world – and Satan, the devil, who is behind it all – wants us to think that things are what Christmas is all about. But as children of God you know that Christmas is more than just things, gifts, food, decorations, lights, Christmas trees, get-togethers, and all that kind of thing. You know that Christmas is the celebration of the birth of your Savior Jesus Christ.

Our Old Testament lesson today from Micah is very similar to the Words of Isaiah in our text. Remember these are God’s Words. God speaks to mankind through Isaiah, through Micah, through many others

in the Old Testament. It is not unusual for God to direct writers of his revelation to quote from one another. Writers of the New Testament also often quote from the Old Testament.

The promises, the prophecy that we see in our text is most simply that God will send the Savior, his Messiah, and that the Messiah's work would become the most important event in the history of Judah and Jerusalem. Remember that God's chosen people were the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob. But especially after they settled in the Promised Land, there was a great falling away from God into unbelief and paganism among God's chosen people and there was a division of the kingdom of Israel into the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah.

God had called Judah and Jerusalem to be his in a special way by promising that the Messiah would come into the world through them. Already in Genesis, God promised that the Savior was to come from Judah. ***"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his."*** Genesis 49:10

Later the Temple in Jerusalem was a symbol of God's presence with his people and a reminder of his promises. Without God's promise of the Savior, God would not have called Israel out of Egypt, and he would not have given them a land of their own and established a worship center for his people in Jerusalem's Temple. Finally, when that promise would be fulfilled, Isaiah saw its great significance and importance. And that promise was fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus did much of his work in Jerusalem and was crucified in Jerusalem.

***"In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills."*** God did not mean that Mount Moriah where the Temple was located would somehow be physically raised to become the highest peak in the world. We must understand this passage and the entire section as spiritual rather than literal. The fulfillment of God's ancient promises has become the highest point of the world's history.

That seems pretty obvious to us, but when we look at the end of this prophecy and its promise of peace, many Bible readers have been tempted to make the Words apply to the physical world. Isaiah is telling us another version of God's promise to Abraham that ***"all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"***. Genesis 12:3.

The coming of people to the mountain of the Lord is to be understood as God calling, gathering, and enlightening his church. This is what we confess in the third article of the Creed when we say: "But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

People come to God because of the promises he fulfilled in Christ. They hear about the work of Jesus whenever they hear the gospel, which is the record of how God fulfilled his Old Testament promises for the salvation of the world. By the power of the Holy Spirit, that gospel draws people of all nations to God. God wrote that people of ***"all nations will stream to it."***

Once people hear and believe the gospel by the working of the Holy Spirit, they invite others to learn of God's grace. This is a natural response to the gospel, just as we become excited when we hear about some new thing that will be of benefit to others. When we believe, we want to witness. Isaiah confirms the truth when he has God's people say, ***"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."*** Think about what happened on Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. On that day, with people from all over the world assembled in Jerusalem, the disciples witnessed and preached and taught about Jesus. In this way they drew others to treasure the promises of God. Can you imagine how the early disciples must have marveled on that day at the fulfillment of Isaiah's Words? But Pentecost was only one way this prophecy was fulfilled. Remembering that the Old Testament often speaks of the entire Word of God – both Law and Gospel – with the word "law", we learn especially from the book of Acts that ***"The law will go out from Zion, the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem."***

This Word of the Lord continues to be fulfilled throughout the world as believers speak of Jesus to others and invite them to come and learn of him.

God's people long to learn the ways of God, and he teaches them. God gave people his Word and teaches them through the written record of his love in the Scriptures.

How is it that ***“The law will go out from Zion, the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem”***? The answer is ***“He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.”*** At every time in history, the assembly of God’s people, that is, the church, has only one task – to hear and share God’s Word. Once believers hear the Word of God they will witness and be walking God’s paths.

Luther reminds us, “Christianity is most truly a hearing or pondering of the Word [of God], in order that Christ may speak to us at all times”. Christianity is a religion that begins with hearing the message of God. No one can walk the path of God without the power of the gospel, and God promises that the power comes through hearing His Word as we read in Romans 10:17: ***“faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.”***

There is another promise in our text. God ***“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.”***

Peace is the work of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus told his disciples in John 14:27: ***“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”***

We look at the end of this promise with the spiritual eyes of faith, not with the physical eyes of politics. The peace promised is peace with God based on Christ and his forgiveness. It is a peace that affects what believers do. They know that God is no longer angry with them because of their sins, and so they can and do live at peace with one another and the world around them. They become peacemakers as Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount: ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”*** Matthew 5:9  
Peace with God changes human hearts.

This is far different than the peace that people in the world are looking for. Across the street from the United Nations building in New York, at the United Nations Plaza, an inscription on a stone wall quotes Isaiah: ***“they shall beat their swords into plowshares.”*** Isaiah 2:4, King James Version Everyone desires peace, but in this world of sin, peace is established by a balance of power between equally powerful nations or by armed force between unequals. What Isaiah means is so very different. God’s people do not ***“train for war.”*** Isaiah saw a spiritual peace based on God’s love in Christ. Only when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead will sinful human beings set aside their sinful natures, and then all hostility and conflict will cease, here on earth, among men. Of course, that will also be the destruction of this world as we know it. But now, right now today, believers focus on the real peace they have within themselves and the real peace that they will have with God in heaven. They do not look at promises of political peace on earth as if mankind will accomplish such earthly peace. Christ himself tells us ***“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.”*** Matthew 24:6

Our text closes with the words ***“Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.”*** When Isaiah considered the promises of God, he encouraged the people of his day to walk in the light of the Lord. To walk in the light is to know the light, to recognize it, and then to follow its path. The psalmist wrote, ***“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*** Psalms 119:105

By faith in Jesus we have been included in the house of Jacob – another name for the church or the assembly of believers. We too are encouraged to use the Word of God so that it might show us the path and give us power to walk as the Lord directs. So as we approach a season which even the world celebrates with many lights, ***“let us walk in the light of the LORD.”*** Amen.