

Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan

December 1, 2013

Isaiah 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and 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, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and 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." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 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. Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Last weekend the country of Iran agreed to a temporary deal to halt any activity that could help them build a nuclear weapon. Iran also agreed to what seems to be rigorous new international inspections. In return, the U.S. and its allies will afford Iran some relief to the crippling regime of international sanctions that has hobbled the Iranian economy in recent years. This deal has been hailed as a success since it seems to delay Iran's ability to get a nuclear weapon.

China, on the same weekend, declared it was going to start monitoring aircraft flying through a certain part of the East China Sea. The Chinese government issued these rules for the airspace it is claiming as its own. **"All aircraft there must identify themselves and their flight plans and obey instructions from the Chinese military or face unspecified defensive measures."** Our government ignored the Chinese threats and sent two unarmed bombers through the airspace.

This quickly led the Chinese to respond, **"China's defense ministry also responded with relative restraint to the U.S. bombers' flight, saying it had monitored and identified the planes, without specifying how or from where."** Both of these instances have one thing in common. They show world peace will never happen. They show countries are going to fight and argue. Countries will continue to try and get the better of each other.

What if it didn't have to be this way? What if countries would work together rather than fight? What if countries took all the money spent on military means and spent it on helping others? What would our world look like? Isaiah gives us an idea of what our world might look like today. He says, **"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, and all nations will stream to it."**

"Many peoples will come and 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.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 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."

Isaiah talks to us about a lasting peace. He assures us this lasting peace is not simply a dream. He assures us that people will not learn the art of war anymore. He tells us people will take their weapons and turn them into peaceful tools. When will this happen? Where will this vision come true? Who can make this lasting peace a reality? This vision can only come true in one place and only one person can make it happen. It can only come true in heaven and only Jesus can make it happen.

How can Jesus get us to heaven? Isaiah tells us, **"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, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and 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.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."**

Isaiah says the message of the Lord which goes out from Jerusalem will draw us to the mountain of the Lord. What is the message of the Lord which has gone out from Jerusalem and drawn us to the

mountain of the Lord? It is the gospel message of Jesus Christ and him crucified for your sins. Jesus came into this world to establish lasting peace for us. This peace cannot be won through military might. This peace cannot be established by treaties.

Why couldn't this peace be won through military might or established by a treaty? It is because this lasting peace isn't an earthly peace. It is a heavenly peace. There was trouble between us and between God. We were born in sin. The fact we were born in sin made us enemies with God. We hated God. We wanted nothing to do with him. We were at war with him. We could never even dream of a way to create peace because our sin made us addicted to fighting God.

There was only one way for peace between God and between us to be gained. God himself needed to win this peace for us. He won this peace for us by sending Jesus into this world. The only way Jesus could win this peace was by coming into this world and living among us to serve as our substitute. Jesus needed to give his life perfect sacrifice to pay for our sins and win peace for God's anger over sin.

Jesus' death and resurrection won established peace between God and man since God has forgiven all our sins. However, we were still God's enemies who wanted nothing to do with him or this lasting peace. What changed our attitude? **"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, and all nations will stream to it."**

"Many peoples will come and 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.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." The Holy Spirit working through the gospel message which has gone out from Jerusalem has transformed our hearts. The Holy Spirit has taken us from being God's enemies to God's children who have lasting peace with him.

This peace means one day we will see Isaiah's vision come true. **"The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 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."** We will see weapons laid aside and experience a peace which lasts forever.

This lasting peace will be wonderful, but we won't see it until we get to heaven. What should we do while we are waiting for the lasting peace of heaven while we are here on earth? Isaiah tells us, **"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, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and 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.' Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD." Isaiah encourages us to walk in the light of the Lord until we have the lasting peace of heaven. Today, we enter into a new season of a new church year. The new season of the church year we enter is the season of Advent. Advent is a good time to stop and evaluate how well we have been walking in this light.

Isaiah tells us what one of the characteristics of walking in the light is before. He says, **“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, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and 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.’”**

Walking in his paths means coming to the Lord’s house and hearing what he has to say to us. How well have you been doing with this lately? Has life gotten in the way for you? Do you come up with excuses rather than trying hard to come? Do you pay attention while you are here? Or do you talk to a neighbor during the service because you are disinterested with what is going on during the service? Do you complain about the people who are here and don’t care about the ones who aren’t?

Maybe you are active and engaged here at church. Maybe you are completely filled with the lasting peace and enjoy walking in the light of the Lord. Are there other places where you can improve your walk? Do you have friends or relatives who have wandered from the light? Do you doubt the ability of God’s word to be able to overcome their hard hearts? Does your proud heart think you don’t need to improve your walking in the light?

Advent evaluation of our walking in the light reveals we can use some improvement in walking in the light. We make excuses instead of walking in the light and being in God’s house. Our pride thinks simply being here is enough for God. We let ourselves be passive and distracted at worship by talking to our neighbor or complaining about someone else who is here instead of being active and engaged. We doubt the ability of God and his word to overcome the hardness of people’s hearts.

What can draw us back to the path of God’s light? How can we improve our spiritual walk this Advent season? The gospel message of Jesus and his love for us is the only thing which can improve our spiritual walk this Advent season. This message is what brought us here today. It has called us to hear our sins are forgiven. It has called us to hear we have lasting peace with God. It is the only thing which can bring us to the light of the Lord.

This gospel message transforms hearts. Everyone who is here today is proof of its power since it is the reason we are here. However, we need to be here in order to hear it. This must be on a consistent and regular basis. Being here on a regular basis isn’t enough. Worship is a place for us to focus and engage our minds. We don’t need to talk to others during the service because talking distracts others and robs us of our opportunity to hear God’s gospel message.

What will this extra focus allow us to hear? **“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, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and 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.’ Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.”** It will give us peace which lasts. Amen.