



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

***November 28, 2010***  
***First Sunday of Advent***  
***Al Krass***

RCL: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

LM: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:1-2,3-4,4-5,6-7,8-9; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44

As we begin the Advent season, churches that use liturgical colors can choose purple to denote a penitential period or select blue, which some associate with hope. Either way, there is plenty of related material in our Scripture readings for this and later weeks.

Isaiah's prophetic oracle (vv. 2-4), followed by an exhortation in verse 5, lifts up the hope of all nations for peace and justice, and promises that this shall come to pass. Isaiah uses mythical language—just imagine this in an animated video!—of Mount Zion being raised higher than Sinai or Hermon. Then, under Zion's attractive power, "all the nations shall stream to it."

People come and beckon others to go up to the temple on top of Mount Zion and put themselves in a classroom. There they can learn God's ways so that they might "walk in his paths." They're not just going to talk the talk. They're going to walk the walk. Isaiah then comments that it's out of Zion, not Jerusalem, that the law—the expression of God's will—will be disseminated to the nations. (We could get into a lot of theological nitpicking here. Don't.) God gives Isaiah the oracle to show him, and through him the people, the goal of all God's activity.

That's revealed, again poetically, in verse 4. Say these words aloud in your study! Recognize that they're among humanity's most treasured hopes. I saw them at the United Nations in New York and at the Peace Palace in The Hague. They have been made into statues and paintings, even under atheistic regimes. The Lord "shall judge between the nations" and bring in a time of equity and justice. Weapons shall be transformed into implements of peace, which will add to the nations' food supply—lots of new plowshares and pruning hooks! These are the "peace dividend" that comes when the obscene sums the nations spend on war-preparedness and war-making are freed up to meet human needs.

This will happen as God's people walk in the might of the Lord. That's what Paul is telling the people in Romans 13: God's hope is close to fulfillment. A "new day" is about to come—the day of salvation. The old ways—the "night"—are "far gone." All this is impelled by God's action, at the time God decides. But, as in Isaiah 2:5, God's work impels the believing community to respond: "Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom 13:12).

Paul lists the behaviors the Roman Christians have to quit doing—individual sins of wild living and bad interpersonal relations. The preacher today must listen to what God is revealing as the besetting sins of our own nights, behaviors that today's people, and

particularly we in the United States, must put away. Here are some: materialism; greed and avarice; consumerism gone haywire; the failure of those who have enough to share with those who have not; the insistence of people in our nation of their right to have cheap Middle East oil, to ruin the environment by driving SUVs all over the place, to refuse to use mass transportation or engage in conversation; our nation's unwillingness to develop and use renewable energy; and the U.S.'s giving a smaller percentage of its gross national product to foreign aid than any other major industrial nation. Those are the works of night, the works of the "flesh" and "its desires." None of those behaviors has any place in the daytime. We are to take them off, like old clothes, and put on the new clothes of Jesus Christ (is there a baptismal reference here?)

Now your hearers may not yet be ready to take all this seriously. Here's where the Gospel reading comes in. The people in Noah's day didn't take the imminence of judgment seriously. They kept on living in the same old ways. Again, with God's judgment imminent, believers still are likely to procrastinate, to pay no attention, to fall asleep at the switch. Jesus' words to them and to us are: It's precisely when you least expect it that the judgment is going to come, the final division. It makes no sense, therefore, to wait until you see the events of judgment happening, thinking you'll change your ways then. Start to "watch" now. Change!

### ***Children's Time [Larry Hollar]***

Have the children close their eyes and imagine darkness, then open their eyes to see more light. Tell them that during the Advent season we often imagine ourselves to be in a time of darkness, waiting for the light to arrive as Jesus comes among us. Remind them that even in darkness God is with us. Things that we do in the dark aren't hidden from God. We are deeply loved by God when we are scared and when we are hopeful, in the dark and in the light.

### ***Musical Suggestions***

City of God—GC 678

Siyahamb' (We Are Marching in the Light of God)—NCH 526