

# The Promise of a Bright Future

## Advent 3A

Text: Isaiah 35:1–10

December 2, 2007      **The Promise of Wholeness and Well-being**

Advent is a season of promise and hope.

It is a time we hear the good news of God's promise to us—  
*The Promise of a Bright Future* in his Kingdom.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent, we heard the promise of peace.  
The word of God that is spoken by Isaiah assures us  
there will be a day when the Kingdom of God will come  
and his peace will reign over the earth.

Isaiah says the day will come when people shall  
*beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;*  
*and nation shall not lift up sword against nation,*  
*neither shall they learn war any more.*                      Isaiah 2:4

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent, we heard the promise of a Messiah.  
Isaiah assures us that God will send an anointed one,  
who will be the means by which the world is transformed  
from a wasteland of hostility and violence to a kingdom of peace.

We are told,  
*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse...*  
*The wolf shall live with the lamb,*  
*the leopard shall lie down with the kid...*                      Isaiah 11:1 & 6

Today, we hear the third promise of Advent—  
the promise that when God's Kingdom comes in its fullness  
it will bring wholeness and well-being  
to our lives.

According to Isaiah, the healing that takes place  
will occur not only in our bodies  
it will occur in the earth as well.

- *the eyes of the blind shall be opened,*  
*and the ears of the deaf unstopped—*
- *the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,*  
*the desert shall rejoice and blossom.*

On that great and glorious *Day of the Lord*,  
our bodies will be healed of all infirmities,  
and all creation shall be made new  
and sing for joy.

It's a beautiful message of hope for God's people,  
but the reality of brokenness in the world...and in our lives...  
makes that promise of God seem like little more than wishful thinking.

Given all the pain and suffering...  
 war and bloodshed...and environmental crises and natural disasters...  
 we see and hear about in the news...  
 it is hard to conceive of a time when  
 wars will cease...pollution will no longer wreak havoc on the environment...  
 and our bodies will experience no more illness or disease.

It probably seemed that way to the people in Isaiah's time.

They must have wondered,  
 how a prophet of God  
 could speak of a bright future,  
 when all they could see on the horizon was the  
 roiling storm clouds of war and devastation  
 getting ready to unleash their fury?

How can Isaiah trust in the promise of God  
 when the gathering storm clouds of war  
 obscure the radiance of God's love  
 shining down on his people?

Indeed, when the storms clouds of conflict between peoples and nations...  
 health and disease... pollution and the environment...  
 hang ominously over us,  
 how can we trust in the promise of God?  
 How can we see the hope of God's promise  
 when our vision is obscured by the bleak clouds of dark reality?

Back in 1910,

Lew Brown, the publisher of *The Evening Independent*,  
 St. Petersburg's old afternoon newspaper,  
 used to promise the readers a free copy of the paper  
*every day the sun doesn't shine*.  
 By 1924, the paper only had to  
 make good on that promise 71 times.<sup>1</sup>

A case, of course, could be made that *The Evening Independent*  
 would never have to give away any papers  
 because, in reality,  
*the sun is always shining*.

True, there are times when we cannot see the sun—  
 at night when our hemisphere is  
 turned away from it,  
 and we see only the dark vastness of space...  
 and on stormy days  
 when thick angry clouds  
 block out its rays—  
 but the sun is always shining!

Likewise, God is always there for his people

working in their lives to deliver them through their times of distress  
into the comfort, peace and hope of his loving arms.

Isaiah can proclaim a message of hope that  
God has not forsaken his people  
because the *eye of faith* enables him to  
see through the dark clouds of the perilous times.

Isaiah sees the radiance of God's love for his chosen ones—  
and that enables him to proclaim  
a beautiful vision to God's people—

a vision of the desert giving bloom  
and of bodies being healed—  
even as the land is about to be  
overrun and devastated by their enemies.

In Christ, you and I are given that same *eye of faith*—  
even as we experience the brokenness of the world—  
where people take up the sword against one another  
and rape and ravage the environment that sustains us—  
even as we experience the brokenness of our lives—  
broken by selfish and self-serving acts of greed...  
and riddled by emotional and physical illness and disease.

In Jesus, we are given a foretaste of the feast to come.  
In him, we do experience little healings—sometimes even major healings—  
of our brokenness of body, mind and spirit.

- Sometimes we see a breakthrough in medical research  
that brings dramatic healing to bodies  
wracked by terminal diseases.
- Sometimes we see forgiveness and reconciliation occurring in places  
we would expect to see only violence and bloodshed  
(like South Africa after the fall of the White apartheid government).
- Sometimes we see the earth recover from environmental disasters  
when we cut back on the pollutants we  
pump into the air and dump in our rivers and streams.

In these surprising and unlikely events,  
God is giving us a foretaste of the Kingdom that is to come—  
the Kingdom that is out there on the horizon just beyond our line of sight.

Do we have the faith to see and trust in that promise?  
Do we see the shining brilliance of God's love for his people...  
or do we see only the dark clouds  
that are blocking the view?

---

<sup>1</sup> *St. Petersburg, Florida: A Visual History* by A. Wynelle Deese - 2006 - Art - 160 pages