



Sermon, Sunday, December 3, 2023

“Let Us Walk in the Light of the Lord!”

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 2:1-5 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² 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. ³ Many peoples shall come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Introduction: What are we worried about?

Today is the first Sunday of Advent in the church calendar. Today's text, the Book of Isaiah, is a long passage with 66 chapters. The New Testament writers often quoted the Old Testament Book of Isaiah. Old Testament scholars divided the book of Isaiah into First Isaiah, Second Isaiah, and Third Isaiah.

Prophet Isaiah was active in Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah, for approximately 30 years between 736 and 701 BC. During that time Israel was divided into South and North. Outside Israel, the superpower Assyria was conquering surrounding countries. Ultimately, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria in 721 BC. The southern kingdom of Judah was not destroyed by Assyria but became a colony of Assyria. In this situation, the prophet Isaiah spoke the word of God.

According to today's text, Isaiah 2:1, Isaiah proclaimed the word to Judea and Jerusalem. Prophet Isaiah was convinced that Zion and the Davidic dynasty were chosen by God. Isaiah declares in; **“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.” (Isaiah 2:2).** The prophet Isaiah shouted that, although not right now, in the last days the whole world will be ruled by the Lord. Additionally, the reason that the gentiles are gathering to the Lord, is because **“for out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3).**

However, the reality of Southern Judea was it was in a very difficult situation, unlike the prophet Isaiah's cry. All the nations of the world looked down on Jerusalem. They also thought little of Zion and the word of the Lord.

So, what did the people of Judea and Jerusalem think when they heard Isaiah's prophecy? Did they think that they should believe and wait for the Lord's victory, which was not yet within reach? Or did they think that they needed to find a specific way to overcome the crisis that Judah, the southern kingdom, was facing?

Both are reasonable arguments. In fact, even though the Lord's victory is guaranteed, specific preparations must be made. The most important thing we need to think about through the questions above is our thoughts on who the owner of history is.

Politicians in Southern Judah believed that Assyria and other hegemonic (dominant) countries exercised leadership in history. However, the prophet Isaiah thought that Assyria and other hegemonic countries were God's tools. So, the prophet Isaiah argued that the Israelites should not fear a powerful nation, but should fear God, who alone controls the history of the world. What do you guys think?



Body: Peace that the Lord will bring

In today's text, the prophet Isaiah talks about what happens when the Lord's victory is revealed. **Isaiah 2:4** says, **“He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”**

The same message was proclaimed by the prophet Micah (Micah 4:3). After talking about the plowshares and the spear, **the prophet Micah says in Micah 4:4, “but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.”**

Experiencing war is a scary thing, both for ancient people and for us living today. However, the prophets Isaiah and Micah proclaim the peace that the Lord will bring in the future.

So, do you think that the peace that the Lord will achieve, as proclaimed by the prophets Isaiah and Micah, is possible in the real world we live in? Or is it not?

It is said that the defense industry is booming these days. Because of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the war between Israel and Hamas, and the existence of belligerent countries, many countries around the world are making tremendous efforts to strengthen their defense capabilities. In this situation, would it be possible to beat their swords to make plowshares or beat spears to make pruning hooks? Wouldn't you rather believe that only a strong national defense power can protect our survival? In this reality, Isaiah's prophetic imagination is difficult to realize.

So, did Isaiah proclaim this vision because he was ignorant of the international situation or because he was simply an idealist?

The reason why Prophet Isaiah was able to make this declaration comes from his experience with holy God. In Isaiah chapter 6, there is a scene of the prophet Isaiah's calling. Isaiah heard angels singing praise to God in the temple. **Isaiah 6:3 describes this, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”** Isaiah, who experienced a holy God, thinks that disaster will come to him and that he will be ruined. This is because, as a person with unclean lips, he saw the holy God.

Isaiah's experience was a special one where he completely denied his existence before God. Because of this experience, Isaiah was able to proclaim the peace that the Lord would bring. However, the challenge for us living today is that it is not easy for us to experience what God will accomplish in the future. If we only look at the world without seeing the promises and vision the Lord has given us, we will not see God's work and vision for the world. When that happens, we will live in a hostile, cynical, escapist, or pandering way toward the world.

So how can we overcome this kind of life? We must have an experience like Isaiah's in our lives. Today's text refers to such an experience as **“walk in the light of the Lord.”** This is a spiritual experience that opens our eyes to a reality that is qualitatively different from that of this world.

So what does the prophet Isaiah mean by **“walk in the light of the Lord”**? It is a symbol (metaphor) pointing to the power of God. Isaiah's words, **“Let us walk in the light of the Lord,”** mean that we should live from the perspective of God, who governs history in a way that fundamentally surpasses our thoughts.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. To symbolize this, we light a candle. The reason we light candles during Advent is because Jesus is the light of the world. So, through this ritual, we must think about why Jesus is the light of the world. Isaiah in today's text thought that amazing things like using swords to make plowshares or beating spears into pruning hooks were possible by walking in the light of the Lord.

We are Christians who have experienced Jesus as the light of life. Therefore, we will come to know and understand the bigger world through what Prophet Isaiah experienced. It is liberation from sin and death. Through Jesus Christ we are set free from the fear of sin and death. Do you believe this and are you sure?

But what is our reality? Even though we say we have overcome sin and death through Jesus, the light, aren't we still living under the control of all kinds of fears? Aren't we afraid of being ignored by others or of becoming poor? Don't we have a lot of worries and concerns? Also, aren't we living with resentment and hostility toward the world? If our lives are like this, we are still in fear of sin and death.



Conclusion: Let us walk in the light of the Lord

Now let's summarize today's sermon. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! The world we live in ignores and denies the light of life. So, it forces us to prepare a sword and a spear to subdue our opponent in any way possible. It is difficult to escape from such worldly demands in our lives. Because we are overwhelmed by the world's demands, we must prepare swords and spears to survive.

The only way for us to escape this kind of life is to experience Jesus as the light of the world. If we fully realize and believe that we will participate in the resurrection life of perfect light through Jesus, we will not be afraid of the world's demands. Rather, we will live in eager anticipation of the day of the Lord when we do beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks. I bless all of you who walk in the light of the Lord.

