

Future Hope: Isaiah 2:1-5

You read Isaiah 2, where the mountain of the Lord rises up to where mountains, hills and streams of people flow to God. Where people ask to be taught how to walk with God. Where disputes are settled, swords are transformed into tools which plant and bring new life, and where wars cease. Isaiah is a place of light. It reminds me of some of our favorite Christmas movies, where, regardless of what has happened in the first hour of the movie, everything works out perfectly, and regardless of which movie you choose AND, to quote Steve Martin, “all the children of the world join hands and sing together in the spirit of harmony and peace.” Oh, Isaiah, you were a writer ahead of your time.

This would make a great movie or sketch today, but this world in which we’re living isn’t a fairy tale. There are no guarantees for a hollywood ending or for our kids across borders to join together as one. For some people this will be their first Christmas since a loved one died; a child, a spouse, a parent, grandparent, friend. Some will experience Christmas alone for the first time; whether divorced, sharing custody of children, or your kids are married now and you’re sharing time with others. Some of you will work this Christmas, others of you will miss loved ones as they work or are deployed. For some, it might be the first Christmas since that diagnosis, or since you’ve lost your house, or since you’ve been laid off. Yes, Christmas can be a wonderful time, filled with great memories, but it can also be a very painful time, filled with tears of loneliness.

During this season we’re bombarded with commercials and magazines and facebook ads showing us everything we need to fix whatever is ailing us. Sale ads arriving in our boxes. And sometimes we buy into it. We want to be fixed. We feel like we’re broken at times. We fear the darkness. We forget that Advent is hope to a world needing light. Advent is the promise of new hopes for a brighter future.

Isaiah’s message is one for everyone, across the ages. Those hundreds of years before Christ and those of us thousands of years later. The message is the same. There’s hope for tomorrow. There’s hope for this afternoon. There’s hope in a new year. There is hope.

In hard times we want instruction, we want guidance, when we don’t know what to do and we need God to teach us. In times of trouble we want to know that there is hope, that the future will be different, that it won’t just be a repeat of the past. In times of hardship, we want to be reminded that we can not only hope in a better future, but we can start today taking action to make it a better tomorrow. In times of darkness, we need to remember we are never alone, there is always light if we look for it.

These Christmas movies we’re so fond of repeatedly show us that love wins, that there is generosity beyond our understanding, that friendships and respect can come from the most unlikely source, they give us hope for our own lives. We buy into these notions because they’re what we desire, what we crave, what we want to see happen. It gives us hope for our own lives, and so too does the prophet Isaiah. That one day the world will

be the place we want the world to be, the place we know it can become. The hope for something better is something we can all rally behind, even Isaiah knew it. New hope brings us together, it makes us community. Our hope for the future shines light into this world. And we know that where there is light, there can be no darkness.

Yet through all this reality of this world we live in, of our own lives, Isaiah is right where we want to be. We want to envision a future where God's temple is higher than the mountains. Where hills and streams flow toward God. Where people want to live like Jesus. Where there is resolution. Where energy is focused on food, justice and new life. Where there is peace on earth and light that shines for all to walk in. We want the world to be a peaceful wholesome place.

Yet I have a question for you. Is it easier for you to believe in the spirit of Christmas, the season of Christmas, than to believe in the words of Isaiah? Is it easier for you to enjoy this season of anticipation and gifts, both the giving and receiving than it is to believe that a day will come when people will stop fighting? A day will come when people yearn more for God than they do for themselves. Can you believe that? I know you want to. Dream with me. Believe with me. Stand in the light of Advent with me as we look toward a future full of hope and new promises in the birth of our Savior.

Sometimes we need a little Isaiah in our life. Especially during difficult times, we want that kind of hope for our future. One that unifies and builds community, where we are excited for tomorrow, and where there's always an invitation to come, let us walk in the light of the Lord together. Amen.