



Isaiah 2:1-5 New Revised Standard Version

¹ 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!



I Want a Plow

It was a day almost as joyous as the holiday itself: the arrival of the Christmas Wish Book. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, its pages became well-worn, dogeared, and circled. Forget the clothing and home accessories which made up the first $\frac{3}{4}$ of the catalog, my heart's desires were set upon the toys. With time, Christmas came and went, and the Wish Book was tossed. I miss those days. It was a much simpler time without the Internet to spoil some of the anticipation. It was a time in which it was easy to tell others what I wanted for Christmas: everything. However, it is much more difficult for me to create a wish list these days. While still a kid at heart, I long for something more, something different, something which has the ability to reach out beyond me.

The Prophet Isaiah understood such a longing and it is to his words that we turn this time of the year in order to prepare our lives for the coming of the Christ Child. Although Isaiah's words have a stern side to them, he was also a man who held onto hope for the future of his people. We find a feeling of expectation in the Old Testament Lesson for this, the first Sunday of the Advent season. While it is easy to fast forward to Christmas, the words of the prophet encourage us to slow down, listen, and pay attention for what God is going to do.

The opening verses of Isaiah 2 invite us to dream again and to imagine the possibilities of what God can do in the midst of a broken world. Much like our present-day world, God's people understood the effects of war, oppression, and injustice. To read the prophets is to discover not only words of judgment for God's people, as well as the nations, but also a message of hope for what God is still capable of doing. Sometimes, we become discouraged by our surroundings. We wonder if things can get much worse.

Isaiah's words challenged hearers then and continue to challenge us today not to give up and to look toward God's tomorrow. This tomorrow is not one of violence and destruction, but one of building, planting, and creating. The prophet states a time will come when the weapons of war will be transformed into instruments of peace and productivity. I long for a day when people will treat the lives of others with dignity, a day when we no longer feel the need to destroy, a day when we put the plow to the ground and share in God's good work. While not a farmer, I really want a plow this Christmas!

Prayer Pebble: Lord, in a time when many wish to give up, help me to hold fast to the hope that is in you. Amen.