

# To the House of the Lord

Advent 1

Pastor Josh Frazee

Isaiah 2:1-5

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Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Did you have a good Thanksgiving? How did you celebrate? Did you invite family over to your house? Or did you make a trip to family who live a distance away? Thursday Anna and I left to go to her uncle's house in Coal Valley near the Quad Cities. The drive was about four hours long. As some of you might agree, four hours is not bad for a day trip—especially compared to an eight-hour trip or something like that.

Probably most of you make a trip to see family on one occasion or another. Maybe your trip is nowhere near as long as four hours. Maybe your trip is so long you have to fly. But you're willing to do it; it's for family. Blood is thicker than water. All that jazz. You would make that trip for holidays, or even for emergencies.

What if you had to make a trip as long as the one to your furthest relatives to get to church to worship? Would you do it? Or would it only be worthwhile in order to see family, and not for the God who gave you your family? Would it not be worth it for the God who has saved you from your sins?

Following the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern and southern, Judah and Jerusalem. The thing was, God had promised in those Old Testament times that He could be found and worshiped in the Temple alone. Everyone had to pilgrimage to Jerusalem to attend worship and receive the Lord's blessings. After the division into northern and southern kingdoms, the problem became even more complex because those in Judah did not desire to go to Jerusalem to worship. What had begun as only a long trip became a trip into another kingdom for half the population of Israel.

This morning, we'll consider what it would have been like living in those times, and where the Lord may be found today.

## Verse 1

As our Old Testament text begins, Isaiah wrote during the time of the division of Israel into those northern and southern kingdoms. Yet Isaiah prophesied that "(i)t shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it."

Isaiah prophesies to both Jerusalem and Judah that the days would be coming when worship would be different—and not just worship itself, but even the location of where it would occur. In the days to come, God would make it accessible for all nations to praise Him and hear His Word. He would do this both at the coming of His Messiah, and also at the End of Time.

Today we begin the season of Advent; and we celebrate two advents—the coming of God's Messiah the first time, as well as His return at the Last Day. We have the Scripture in which the Messiah said that worship would no longer be on a particular mountain, "neither on (the) mountain (to which a Samaritan woman referred) nor in Jerusalem," implying that worship would no longer be done only at the Temple. He continued: "the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth (John)." In other words, the time had already come when worship could be and would be done anywhere in faith.

Likewise we have the Scripture that at the Messiah's return, every knee will bow. "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God (Romans)." Indeed, all nations shall flow to the place of the Messiah's return and will have no choice but to confess God's Messiah as the King of everything.

For those who do not believe, neither worship here and now nor at the Messiah's return would be considered times of praise and joy. They deny the truth of God's Word. But for us, as those called by God's Word and Spirit, Luther wrote that at worship we receive "truth, pure doctrine, safety, (and) peace." So for us, worship is a time of praise and joy. But what is more, we are no longer called to pilgrimage to the Temple at Jerusalem to worship correctly. God's Messiah has paved the way for us to worship in spirit and truth in all places, even here at Augsburg Immanuel. Worship, then, is no longer required to be done at one house of the Lord—the Temple—but may be done at all houses of the Lord, that is, the Church, which, as you know, may be found wherever the Word is taught in its full truth and purity and the Sacraments are administered according to the Messiah's instruction.

### Verse 2

Isaiah then goes on with the prophesy, writing that "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 those living in Isaiah's time, this statement was probably received with varying opinions. Those who lived in Judah may have longed for the ability to once again worship where the Lord desired, being unable to attend at the Temple in Jerusalem due to the division of Israel. Others of those in Judah may not have cared, priding themselves on worship at the duplicate Temple that they had built—without God's command—or refusing to worship out of anger toward God or refusal to believe that He would allow anything bad to happen to them. They were children of Abraham, after all, so those prophecies about being delivered into Babylon had to be fictional.

Those living in Jerusalem probably would have had similar thinking to those in Judah who doubted the prophecies of doom and destruction. They were children of Abraham *and they* had the Temple, so they had to be safe, right?

How often do you forsake God's warnings of judgment for doing or thinking or believing certain things? God can and does forgive all sin for the sake of His Messiah, but continuing in sin can lead to the unforgivable sin of losing your faith. We are well aware that God has sent His Messiah once to pay for our sins, but we should not let this become a cover-up for sin. While the Messiah came the first time to save us; when He returns, it will be to judge us. It will be to judge you: whether you have been faithful or not. When He returns, He will look at whether every person of all time and of every nation has been faithful or not.

### Verse 3

"He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and 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 anymore."

When God's Messiah returns, He shall judge, and then He shall lead us into that place where we no longer learn war. Where swords are made into plowshares and spears are made into pruning hooks.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not lose hope. God can and does continue to make you faithful through the hearing of His Word in its full truth and purity. He knew that it was only through His Word that we could be saved, and that's why He sent His Messiah to say that the time had come for worship to be done all over the world. But He sent the Messiah not just to proclaim this good news, but also to pay for the sins of all people.

For these reasons brought to us on account of God's Messiah, we can say with those about whom Isaiah prophesied, "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." It is the Advent season, and we look for our Messiah's coming. Thanks be to God through that Messiah that we don't have to fly to Jerusalem every Sunday and every Wednesday night. We can worship Him and praise Him and especially hear His Word in spirit and truth right here.

In the Name of God's Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Amen.