

Swords to Plowshares

Isaiah 2:1-5

Introduction

Today marks the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is the season of hope and expectation among Christians. It reminds us that as Christ has come once, He will also come again. The peace that He brought to the hearts that trust Him will eventually rule over all the earth when Christ returns and subdues His enemies and makes them His footstool. But, for now, we wait, and the world that we live in is not a peaceful world.

In a recent study, the Global Peace Index, which measures ongoing conflict around the world, I read that global peacefulness is at a 15-year low. As best as I could tell from the report, there are roughly 32 countries at war in some form right now in our world. Those might be major conflicts like those between Russia and Ukraine. Or it might be like the 2-year civil conflict in Ethiopia between the Ethiopian government and the Tigrayan people, which has recently, God willing, come to an end this past November 3.

During this Advent season, we will sing of hope, peace, and love, but let's be honest about it. We are singing with hope for peace and love to reign. We long for the day when peace and love will be evident, but we know we are not there yet. While those who have placed their trust in Christ know peace and love in their hearts and in their families, and in the church, they do not live in a world full of peace and love. Yet, we hope for that day, which is what we will look at briefly this morning in Isaiah 2:1-5...

Isaiah 2:1-5

¹ This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the last days

the mountain of the LORD'S temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.

³ Many peoples will come and say,

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.”

The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He will judge between the nations
and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

⁵ Come, descendants of Jacob,
let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Exposition

Isaiah's prophetic ministry spanned the reigns of king Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, all of whom were kings of Judah. Isaiah's ministry warns Judah and her kings to put their trust in the LORD and not in political alliances. Over the course of Isaiah's ministry, Judah would look to establish peace and security in places other than the LORD. Isaiah warns them that they will not find the peace that they are looking for in those places. Instead, they will encounter war and captivity, but God will not ultimately abandon them. There is a hope that remains for the people of God.

This brings us to Isaiah 2:1-5, where Isaiah speaks of the days following Judah's discipline from the LORD. After Judah is disciplined, God would have mercy and fulfill his promise. What was the promise? That the nations would stream to the mountain of the LORD!

This is Isaiah's way of speaking about fulfilling God's promise to Abraham, whom God told would be a blessing to all nations. We see this explicitly mentioned in Exodus 19 when the LORD constitutes the tribes of Israel as His chosen people, His holy nation, which would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, if they kept His Word. Sadly, however, the LORD's people did not keep His Word, and thus they were disciplined by the LORD. But the LORD was still faithful to His promise, as Isaiah 2 tells us. The mountain of the LORD would still be exalted, and the nations would stream to it.

Those who stream to it, as Isaiah 2:2 says, are all the nations who will say what we read in Isaiah 2:3-4. These are the people who, by nature, were estranged from the promises of God. These are gentiles. These people, in their flesh, have no claim to God. Yet, because of God's work in the world, because God has exalted Himself, the nations see and believe and come running to the LORD, which is exactly what Judah should have expected if they were paying attention.

But we ask? How could all the nations of the earth ever truly come together? How is such unity possible? Isaiah 2:3 tells us, "The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." And what is this law? What is this word of the LORD? I believe this passage points us to the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ. As Luke 24:46 records Jesus' words regarding the fulfillment of the prophecy about the Messiah: "The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

The proclamation of this good news begins in Jerusalem and then works its way throughout the world, inviting all nations to come and know the grace and forgiveness of God that reconciles man, woman, boy, and girl to God and to one another. When I think of this passage, it reminds me of the Christmas hymn, "O' Holy Night," in the third verse, we sing, "Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His Gospel is Peace. Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother, And in His name, all oppression shall cease."

Such peace is only a peace that Christ, who can transform our sin-sick hearts, can bring. Only Christ can bring together the nations that were formerly at war with one another. Only Christ can change us so that we turn our tools for killing into tools for cultivation.

I know this may be hard to believe, but one day, we won't be arguing over whether or not we should have a right to bear arms or if a country needs more nuclear weapons because peace will reign over all because Christ will be exalted above all. There will be no more road rage deaths or mass shootings or terrorism or wars because peace will reign through Christ when He returns. One day death will die forever because we will be raised to inherit new bodies like his when Jesus returns.

Conclusion

For this day, we hope, we are filled with expectation. But until then, we are called to walk in the light of the LORD. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).