

Prophet
Isaiah 2:1-5

2The 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 ploughshares,
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!

Gospel
Matthew 24:36-44

³⁶ 'But about that day and hour
no one knows,
neither the angels of heaven,
nor the Son, but only the Father.

³⁷ For as the days of Noah were,
so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

³⁸ For as in those days before the flood
they were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage,
until the day Noah entered the ark,
³⁹ and they knew nothing
until the flood came
and swept them all away,
so too will be
the coming of the Son of Man.

⁴⁰ Then two will be in the field;
one will be taken and one will be left.

⁴¹ Two women will be grinding meal together;
one will be taken and one will be left.

⁴² Keep awake therefore,
for you do not know
on what day your Lord is coming.

⁴³ But understand this:
if the owner of the house had known
in what part of the night the thief was coming,
he would have stayed awake
and would not have let his house be broken into.

⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready,
for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Reading the Prophet This Week

We're back at the beginning of Isaiah,
the original generation voice of the prophet,
anticipating the threat of Babylon and exile,
and shaping the hope of what lay beyond it
Advent this year hears 'First Isaiah' for 4 weeks

The headline of hope, the vision:
concerning Judah (southern region)
and Jerusalem (city):
the highest mountain,
the Lord's house
to which all nations stream

Do they all become Jewish?
What do they learn,
how will they walk?

Yahweh will judge and arbitrate
they beat swords into ploughshares
beyond warfare

imagine this preached before Babylon conquers
while a temple and nation stood 300 and 400 years
Imagine this edited during and after exile
to reshape hope

The concluding exhortation is:
meanwhile, come walk in God's light –
what does that look like?

In what way does Jesus Christ,
and the Christian Church,
fulfill or develop this hope and vision?

Reading the Gospel This Week

Advent begins with a gospel apocalypse:
Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21
What is our hope and vision,
and in what way does a baby's birth fulfill it?

As we start the 'year of Matthew',
expect a lot of 'fulfillment' talk,
framing expectation in Hebrew scripture,
then claiming that Jesus realizes the hope
incarnation of that hope, in flesh and blood

Start with the unknown timing in v36
of the threat and promise, fear and hope
detached from vv34-35 apocalyptic talk
Do you believe in an 'end time' –
or accept it as 'unknowable'?

2 examples or illustrations follow:
Noah's neighbours lost in the flood,
Homeowner burgled in the night
Mark omits them,
Luke moves them out of this apocalypse to c12, c17

Yankee evangelical piety, our 'host culture'
entertains 'rapture' visualization
unfamiliar to Trinity Annan folk

We do recognize climate crisis' unequal impacts
or economic turns in which some won or lost
or epidemiological events, realized by individuals

The second example is hard – is the Lord a thief?
Why would the owner resist that thief?
To what do we cling – does it matter, in the end?