

## Isaiah 2:1-5 – Advent 1 – The Highest of the Mountains – November 30, 2025

+In Nomine Iesu+

Advent came in with a storm this year. This season of quiet contemplation brought a little work—shoveling the snow—clearing the driveways. Although snow also brings a little quiet into our noisy world. Traffic is light. Snow brings beauty and calm—at least when we are inside. And we sense the change in the calendar as the weather changes. Advent begins a new church year. And our focus changes as the story of Christ is told once more.

This year, our theme for the whole church year is *Celebrating the Saints*. We are going to lean into the example of faith and faithfulness that we see in the saints who have come before us. For millennia, the church has honored the saints of our history. Just in December we remember John of Damascus, Nicholas of Myra, Ambrose of Milan, Lucia, Daniel, Stephen, and John. There is a whole list of commemorations and festivals listed in our hymnals. A good Lutheran calendar will also list these dates.

Today, the church remembers St. Andrew—the Disciple, Apostle, and Martyr. He was one of the first to follow Jesus. He was first a disciple of John the Baptist. And he brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus—because of John’s preaching. And it is St. Andrews Day that technically signals the beginning of Advent. The first Sunday in Advent falls on the Sunday nearest to his festival. And today the two days line up exactly.

Advent begins with anticipation. We look forward with the Prophets of old to the manifestation of Christ. “This is He who seers in old time; chanted of with one accord; whom the voices of the prophets; promised in their faithful word.” Advent is all about Christ’s arrival—in the incarnation in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary—to His holy city in Jerusalem—in the blessed Sacrament—and at the end of time.

Today, we let Isaiah take the lead. We spend our time with his prophecy that is our Old Testament reading. As we interpret Isaiah, as we interpret the whole Old Testament, it is important to remember that Jesus says the entire Old Testament is about Him. Jesus is the key for rightly handling the Hebrew Scriptures. And maybe, in reading Isaiah ourselves, we begin to see that Jesus was right.

Isaiah is a prophet, and frequently prophets are called seers. And seers have visions. Isaiah introduces his prophecy, his sermon here, with these words, “The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”

God gave Isaiah a vision of what He intended to do. A vision of a word. This is interesting language. One can hear a word—one can speak a word—but Isaiah sees a word. We don’t really know what the prophetic experience was like, but it must have been interesting.

But let’s join with Isaiah today, and see if we can see this word too. Because he certainly gives us a beautiful picture of things. Things as they ought to be. Things as God desires them to be.

The prophecy specifically addresses Judah and Jerusalem. And yet, as we read this passage, the details seem too big for the events that actually happened historically in this little land on the southeastern edge of the Mediterranean.

And this is one of the hardest things to understand as we read the Old Testament. Maybe you are even reading through Isaiah with us right now on our three-year bible reading plan. What do we do with all of these stories and prophecies about Israel and Judah and Jerusalem? What does all of this have to do with us? Or, more importantly, what does all of this have to do with Jesus?

The prophecies here for Judah and Jerusalem never really fully materialize for Judah and Jerusalem in the histories of the Old Testament. And they certainly aren't true for the modern nation called Israel. No one is streaming to Jerusalem for God's word and wisdom today. No one is beating their swords into farming tools—not over there.

But remember, the Old Testament is talking about Jesus. The whole thing. Whether history, or poetry, or prophecy. The events, the wisdom, the predictions are all about Him. The lives of the Old Testament saints give us a selective history of God's redemptive plan. But it is all going somewhere .

The prophecies of Isaiah are promises and pathway to Jesus. So the picture we get of Judah, and Jerusalem, and Israel itself, is a picture of Jesus. What they heard—what they were—what they did—happened to announce the coming Messiah.

Now, the Israelites failed...utterly. The Prophets were right. In fact, you can go back just one chapter to see the problems that Isaiah finds in the nation in his day. Isaiah says, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged."

But even their failures highlight Jesus' success. What they were unable to do, Jesus did. He fulfilled the nation. Jesus is Israel. The true Israel. The completion of Israel. Israel reduced to One.

So, the promises about Judah and Jerusalem are about the coming Messiah. The whole Old Testament shines forward to Him. Jesus fulfills the promises. Jesus fulfills the temple. Jesus fulfills the land. He is the mountain of the Lord. He is Zion. And so, when we read these words from Isaiah 2, we will see these prophecies fulfilled in Jesus.

"It 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."

So, these five verses from Isaiah today, point us to two realities of what shall come to pass in Jesus. And here we see what God will accomplish in the world in Jesus, first regarding worship, and then regarding war.

Remember, I am suggesting that Jesus is mount Zion. He is the mountain of the house of the Lord. And the fulfillment of this promise is found in the cross of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. There He is lifted up. There He is exalted to the highest place. There He draws all nations to Himself. So these verses describe a condition that already begins to exist in these latter days between Advent and Advent. Between His cross and the last day—the resurrection of all flesh.

Right now, Jesus holds that exalted status as the highest of the mountains. And we are wise to recognize it, and come to Him, and worship. But look at the form that this

worship takes. Isaiah, with a beautiful and poetic style, reminds us the grace and favor that we find in this exalted Christ.

When we come to Him—or better—when we are called by Him—when we go up to the mountain of the Lord—He teaches us His ways. He doesn't celebrate our ways. We learn to walk in His paths. He doesn't join us on ours. We learn His Law, His Torah, His instructions. He doesn't leave us to demand our own.

In worship, we hear from Jesus who is the Word of the Lord. He is the word that Isaiah saw in his vision. Jesus is our source for truth—and His truth brings eternal life. And so, the nations and peoples flow to Him. And as Isaiah says, many will abandon their idolatry—and their false beliefs—and their false demands—and will flow to Christ.

Now we would be remiss if we didn't recognize also that the fulfillment of this prophecy takes place through the Church. If the Church exists to preach the purity and beauty of God's Word—and to administer the Sacraments in truth and grace—then those who stream to Jesus, stream to His Church. The church is a gathering of saints around Jesus Christ. And there isn't another way.

The Church is the pillar and the ground of truth. It is the Israel of God—according to Paul in Galatians 6. It is the body of Christ according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. And it was founded on the Prophets and Apostles according to Paul in Ephesians 2.

And notice that Jesus through His church has impact on the nations—on all the nations—on all people. In fact, the nations are mentioned four times in our reading. The spread of the good news of Jesus will extend to all peoples. And we respond by going to Zion, to the highest mountain, to Jesus, for truth.

So peoples and nations flow to Jesus for His Word, and this Word brings an end to our conflicts and wars. Not only does Jesus teach us His ways, He judges between the nations. He decides disputes for people. He brings our warfare to an end.

The hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*—perhaps better than any other—grasps the mood and tone of Advent. And, although we aren't singing it just yet—it belongs a little later in Advent—it will have a prominent place in our services this year. The last verse of this hymn came to mind as I was thinking about this text from Isaiah.

Listen, “O come, Desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind; Bid Thou our sad divisions cease, and be Thyself our King of Peace.” Isaiah reminds us of one of the most overlooked works that Jesus brings about in our world. It is the purpose and mission of God to bring human warfare—human conflict—to an end.

Isaiah says, “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.”

These words offer a description of the blessed results which flow from the just rule and reign of Christ. Jesus brings peace. And His peace is genuine. It is peace with God. And it is peace with one another. Jesus removes the weight and guilt of sin. And we are made new in the worship of our God.

And this newness means that we are at peace. We let go of family conflicts. We are set free from grudges against those with whom we share a pew. We leave all such things with God to set right. We seek peace—and end our sad conflicts.

In Christ we are free to set aside our need to be heard. We can set aside our own way. In Christ there is no need to demand our rights. It means, in Christ, that we have no need to be unkind, and rude, and hateful, and destructive, or at war with one another. And in this humility, we see the blessings of God.

The fulfillment of this prophecy began with the angels announcement, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Now, we must know there is still something very future about these promises. There will be conflict on earth until Jesus brings all of this to fulfillment at His return because there will be sin until His return. Sin is the cause of human conflict. But it need not be that way among us. It is as St. Paul says, “As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

And although we must look at this whole prophecy in light of the last day, this radical change exists already in Christ—in His Church—and in His kingdom. And as we pray for His kingdom to come, we pray that it would come among us with His peace.

Isaiah’s prophecy is about Jesus. And Christ is with us until the end of the world. So, this prophecy brings us benefits now. In Christ, we can see the beautiful picture of Isaiah’s Word. In Christ, we can flow to the mountain of the Lord. We can be reconciled with God. We can live in His peace. We can learn His ways and walk in His paths.

And in Christ—no matter what anyone else is doing—we can start beating our swords into plowshares. We can live in the peace that only the forgiveness of Christ can bring. And we can pray with the prophet Isaiah, “O house of Jacob (that’s us, by the way), come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.” In the name of Jesus. Amen.

*+Soli Deo Gloria+*