

Choose to Wait

This Sunday marks both the beginning of the liturgical year and the start of Advent. Advent is a unique opportunity for the faithful to anticipate the coming of Jesus by exploring eschatology (how will it all end?), Christology (who is Jesus and is he the Christ?), and discipleship (what does it mean to follow Jesus?). Although Advent is a time of waiting and preparing, it is also a time of decision making. What do we hope for (eschatology)? Do we believe that Jesus will help us get there (Christology)? And how (discipleship)?

Focus scripture: Isaiah 2:1–5

The first testament readings throughout the Advent season focus on Isaiah and help us to explore our eschatology by painting with words and song what hope in a new world might look like.

The book of Isaiah is epic and, not surprisingly, prophetic. The book, as we know it, spans centuries and speaks directly to the people of Jerusalem under the rule of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires. In many ways, Isaiah is an ideal prophet. He speaks God's word offering judgement, comfort, and hope while still remaining pastoral. In the middle of a war field, Isaiah declares that swords will be beaten into ploughshares. What might be a modern-day equivalent that your community could easily relate to? It is unreasonable to suggest that this image of peace makes the end of war today likely, as these creative images, or dreams planted in the faithful have been handed on for thousands of years and yet war still exists.

The gospel of Matthew is familiar with the first testament and refers to it often. The dreams and aspirations that we read in Isaiah are ones that many of the first readers of the gospel of Matthew carried with them. We may experience some echoes in language. It is tempting to read the gospel into the first testament; to act like Jesus is a fulfillment of all of the prophecies that we will read in Isaiah over the next few weeks. Such imposition of Jesus into the first testament has dangerous repercussions as it supports anti-Semitic rhetoric that claims the Jewish

people neglected and mistreated Jesus. It is important to remember that the first readers of the gospel were, in many ways, like us; they already believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and they had already been captivated by the visions of the prophets like Isaiah. Matthew's writings and parallels can be seen more as literary tools used to help promote Jesus as the new Moses.

Psalm 122 gives an example of how to live into the hopes set out in Isaiah. We are invited to imagine what the house of God is, and what it might be like. It is a place that we will be certainly glad to arrive, but it is also a place that we are called and inspired to build on Earth as well.

In **Romans 13:1–14** we are invited to reflect on our role and actions as disciples of Jesus who are waiting for God's hope to be fulfilled while living in the world. How should we act while we are waiting? To whom should we look to as role models and guides?

Matthew 24:36–44 provides an interesting metaphor for the second coming of Christ, like a thief in the night. The author encourages the people to prepare, to be on the alert and ready, to expect the unexpected.

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In this first week of Advent, we are encouraged to choose to actively wait for Jesus' coming. What might that coming look like? Will the coming of Jesus bring a world peace so preposterous that it is hard to imagine? Will we glimpse what it is like to be in "the house of the God"? Will we transcend the creature comforts that often trap us?



Focus scripture

Isaiah 2:1–5

Additional scriptures

Psalm 122

Romans 13:11–14

Matthew 24:36–44

**God of Hope,
bless our Advent
journey, strengthen
our faith, secure our
bonds, and enliven
our imagination for
a better world.
Amen.**

Lectio Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

