



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of November 13, 2022 (Isaiah 36:1-3, 11-20, 37:1-7, 2:1-4)

Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

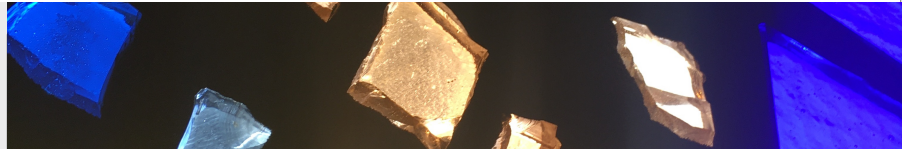
We are surrounded with stories: good news stories, bad news stories, true stories, rumors,

We are surrounded with rumours: rumours quickly dismissed, rumours which cause questions, rumours which destroy people, institutions, nations.

We pray for all who are suffering or who continue to suffer as the result of the thoughtlessness of others. May they take some shade of comfort in knowing that you know the truth. We pray for healing of heart and reputation.

God of grace, we pray for those who know that they have hurt others, sometimes unaware of their actions before it is too late. May they know that the past cannot be undone, but the future can be different.

Lord, may we turn words from weapons to wisdom, our...



Devotions for Life

The Story: Isaiah 36:1-3, 11-20, 37:1-7, 2:1-4

Context: This week's passage is a bit truncated and may be confusing. First of all, it is a bit strange that the lectionary prescribes Isaiah 2:1-4 as the last passage, but it does so, because this powerful verse is meant to be a response to the story in Isaiah 36-37. So keep that in mind.

One of the interesting things about Isaiah 36-37 is that it's much more of a story than a prophecy. In fact it also appears in 2 Kings 18-19, almost word for word. The story is kind of the next chapter from what Israel was worried about in Micah last week. There are a lot of big connections.

Last week we learned that Israel is concerned about Assyria attacking them. Well, by the time we get to this point in Isaiah, Assyria has. They have conquered the Northern kingdom (whose capitol is Samaria and was referred to last week in Micah). They are now going for the Southern kingdom, which means eventually conquering Jerusalem (also referred to last week), which up to this point they have not done so. But en route to do so, they have conquered some smaller, rural towns including the region from which Micah hails. In today's story, we read about Assyria's attempt to conquer Jerusalem.

The lectionary then brings us back to the beginning of

...actions from hurt to healing. May we change the rumours attached to people and places to bring about positive change in a world that needs it so desperately. For your love's sake we pray. Amen.



Compassion & Justice:

This month we are supporting STEP's annual Christmas toy drive. As the Bible calls us to **do justice**, it's important to remember the ways in which STEP is a primary organization in town that does this work to which we are called. One of their biggest fundraisers is their "give to the max campaign", wherein gifts given before November 17th are matched up to \$50,000. If you have the means, make a contribution before then! Head to www.stepslp.org for more info.

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Isaiah with the powerful and famous Isaiah 2:4. This verse is inspiration for a sculpture outside of the United Nations that depicts a man beating a sword into a plowshare (see picture on the sidebar). The story in 36 and 37 is all about war in its many and varied forms, and pulling us back to Isaiah 2:1-4 is the Narrative Lectionary's way of saying, "this is what Isaiah is talking about."

Reading the Story: As you read today, keep the ways of nations and the world in mind. Wonder about the ways in which war has changed over time and the ways in which it hasn't changed it all. And wonder, what does it look like for us to beat swords into plowshares today? Also, the verses in 36 & 37 can be hard to follow. Read slowly and carefully, but also know that it's pointing to Isaiah 2:1-4.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. What images, words, or phrases stood out to you?
2. If you could ask a Hebrew Scholar one question about these passages, what would it be?
3. How do mountain streams normally flow? How does the stream in this passage flow? What is significant about that?
4. What do you think Isaiah means by "he will judge between the nations"? And "arbitrate for many peoples"?
5. What do you think about the images in verse 4? How has the world made progress over time? Why is peace so difficult?
6. Why do nations war against one another? What contributes to it?
7. How does rhetoric factor into war making? How does it factor into peacemaking? How does it function in the story in Isaiah 36 and 37?
8. What actions can we take to be makers of peace?

