

Advent, Day 2

Monday, December 3

Read Isaiah 2:1-5, 11:1-9

“They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Isaiah 11:9

PEACEFUL KINGDOM

I was watching the Nature Channel last week. There were several shows about different species of animal chronicling the way they live and survive. The thing that struck me was how violent nature seems to be. It is a constant struggle for living space and for adequate resources needed to sustain life. The weak tend to die or become victims of the stronger. Those who adapt survive.

Ants, beetles, termites, struggle for living space beneath the verdant growth of the rain forest. Wildebeest, antelope, water buffalo, compete for space while the lion and hyena stalk and kill them in order to feed their young and retain their own strength.

Nature is not a peaceful place.

The description in Isaiah, therefore, seems very out of place and out of sync with the way life has evolved. The wolf and the lamb do not graze together. The ox and the lion do not sleep side by side. Is the writer in Isaiah so foolish as to expect such a thing? What could he mean by such pictures?

I believe this passage is a metaphor for the sense of peace that God intends within creation.

The ways of nature and its balance have determined the way it has been from the beginning. Life feeds on life, but in a way that maintains an overall harmony. There is an intricacy of interdependency that, if we pay attention to it, simply boggles our minds.

But there is a fly in the ointment now. That fly is humankind. We have threatened, by our voracious over-consumption of land and resources, the fragile eco-system of which we are meant to be a part. We have altered the balance. We are the ones who can ‘hurt and destroy’ in God’s holy mountain of peace and harmony.

We have hurt and destroyed one another. We have hurt and destroyed the earth. We have failed to live up to our calling as responsible stewards over all that is.

The Psalmist reminds us that we have been created ‘a little less than gods’ and have been given ‘dominion’. But dominion does not mean license. Dominion does not give us free rein to take and take and never replenish.

The hope that Isaiah expresses is that we, as humans, will return to our calling. That we will remember who and whose we are, and in remembering, come back to the peace of God in which all things work together as they are intended. It is Isaiah’s hope that we will return to the unity with our creator that allowed us to walk in the garden of earth without rancor or fear.

Peace is always surprising. It is surprising because we experience it so seldom. We have come to not expect it. We have come to the place where we guard ourselves against each other rather than trust that peace is possible.

In this season may our hunger for peace be rekindled, and our actions and decisions promote that peace that we find at the manger, where we see again the possibility of our salvation. May we find ways to make peace happen.

Let there be peace on earth. And let it begin with me!