

SCRIPTURE READING FOR NOVEMBER 21, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Isaiah 9:1-7
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹ But those who have suffered will no longer be in pain. *The territories of Zebulun and Naphtali* in Galilee were once hated. But this land of the Gentiles across the Jordan River and along the Mediterranean Sea will be greatly respected.

² Those who walked in the dark have seen a bright light. And it shines upon everyone who lives in the land of darkest shadows.

³ Our Lord, you have made your nation stronger. Because of you, its people are glad and celebrate like workers at harvest time or like soldiers dividing up what they have taken.

⁴ You have broken the power of those who abused and enslaved your people. You have rescued them just as you saved your people **from Midian**.

⁵ The boots of marching warriors and the blood-stained uniforms have been fed to flames and eaten by fire.

⁶ A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace.

⁷ His power will never end; peace will last forever. He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong. He will always rule

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Last week we heard from the prophet Amos, who worked in the northern kingdom of Israel in the mid-700s BCE. Today we will hear from the 1st prophet called Isaiah, who worked in the southern kingdom of Judah, mainly in the city of Jerusalem, a few years after Amos. Isaiah was speaking to people who were weathering attacks from the northern kingdom and other surrounding tribes, and were tempted to make political alliances with bigger empires to protect themselves, and Isaiah was insistent that they should rely on God and God's promise. While the kings in Jerusalem were mostly as corrupt as the northern kings were, there were two who weren't terrible and who made an effort to turn the people back to God's way so that they would be able to live faithfully in God's promise. One of those was Hezekiah, who became king sometime around the time that Isaiah wrote the words we hear today. Written by @Teri Peterson on Facebook.

Remember that the Hebrew prophets were also poets, they wrote in verse with metaphors, rhymes and word-pictures to try to articulate a vision that was beyond what mere words could hold.

As you read and hear two of these poetry-prophecy-visions in chapter 2 and 9 pay attention to what you notice in them and what they make you wonder about...

WHEN WAS THIS? Isaiah prophesied from Jerusalem in the latter half of the 8th century BCE as the Neo-Assyrian empire was rising in power (think of the area of Syria and Iraq). Under its king Tiglathpileser III (745-723 BCE) the empire expanded into the region abutting northern Israel.

Several neighboring kingdoms of Israel banded together to oppose Assyria. But Ahaz the Israelite king wouldn't join. So the kings of Samaria and Damascus attempted a coup, replacing Ahaz with a more malleable, puppet king, who would side with them against Assyria. This would have broken The rule of David's family line. This talked about in Isaiah 7:2 and might be the troubles spoken of by Isaiah as darkness in our text.



with **justice** and **RIGHTEOUSNESS**.
The Lord All-Powerful
will make certain
that all of this is done.

Isaiah 2:1-5
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹ This is the message that I was given about
Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the future, the mountain
with the Lord's temple
will be the highest of all.
It will reach above the hills;
every nation will rush to it.

³ Many people will come and say,
"Let's go to the mountain
of the Lord God of Jacob
and worship in his temple."

The Lord will teach us his Law
from Jerusalem,
and we will obey him.

⁴ He will settle arguments
between nations.

They will pound their swords
and their spears
into rakes and shovels;
they will never make war
or attack one another.

⁵ People of Israel, let's live
by the light of the Lord.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The territories of Zebulun and Naphtali These were two of the regions of Israel, settled by the tribes of the same names. In the north, in what would later be called Galilee they were some of the Jewish lands first defeated and decimated by the Assyrians. By the time of Isaiah those lands were populated primarily thereafter by pagans, and the few Jews remaining had difficulty holding onto their ancestral faith

from Midian. The name Midian means "strife" in Hebrew. After his wife Sarah died, Abraham married a woman named Keturah, who bore him six sons: (Genesis 25:1–2). The fourth son, Midian, had five sons: (Genesis 25:4; 1 Chronicles 1:33) whose nomadic descendants came to be known as the Midianites, distant relatives of the Israelites who often oppressed and sought to overthrow Israel (See specifically Judges 6:2 & Numbers 22). They are both a specific enemy of Israel and a metaphor for those who oppose the people of God.

justice:: מִשְׁפָּט pronounced /mishpat/ - Justice, it's used to describe the act of a judge deciding a ruling - a judgment. It also means: justice, what is right, rectitude, fairness. The implication is that the judgment is all based in the law - or righteousness (tsedaqah) of YHWH.

RIGHTEOUSNESS:: צְדָקָה pronounced /tsedaqah/ - righteousness. It refers to God's attribute as sovereign. So at its heart it a reference back to how and who God is when used to describe people. It's closely associated with honesty, justice, love, action, what is right and just. *What God would do/is. If sin pulls us away from God, it's its opposite.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Isaiah lived and wrote during a time of great threat, trouble and unknown outcomes. The history and culture of the people was threatened. They were afraid of being replaced by other peoples by a foreign imperial power. What do you notice about this fear in the texts? What images of hope and God's faithfulness do you notice?
- We often jump right to the Christmas Story, the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, when we hear Isaiah 9; but if you linger in the context of the day; what image is Isaiah painting for the people? The meal of all meals in Isaiah 2 (a vision repeated in Isaiah 25 and Micah 4) is at the root of communion. How do you (or don't you) experience as this meal of peace-making for all the nations?
- What invitation do you heard the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?