

Read also Revelation 21:9-14, 22-27. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Jennifer Johnson, our Administrative Assistant, grew up in the Philippines. Each year when school started, they began with a parade in which flags were flown representing all the nations of the students. You can even see her up on the balcony to the left.

To her, this was normal. It's more of an adjustment here in the States, where cultures seem to have difficulty meshing.

I asked Jennifer to go on the web for a picture of officials of nations parading together with their flags. *There were none*, except for the Olympics, and a few other sporting events.

Isaiah saw a vision of his nation and its capital. Jerusalem sat high on a mountain and people from all nations pilgrimaged there. Hear the story. READ Isaiah 2:1-5

This is fabulous news! In this passage the silver thread that weaves through Isaiah's book suddenly becomes a bright Promise of more than we can think or imagine. Let's take a look:

1. Jerusalem, God's city, becomes desirable to all people for worship. People from everywhere will come together.

In 1972, a hundred thousand high school and college students gathered in Dallas from all over this nation to hold a "Jesus rally." Their goal was to change the nation with the gospel. Called Explo 72, Billy Graham spoke, and "Jesus music" (contemporary Christian music) began. People streamed here. Perhaps it was a small foretaste of Isaiah's vision.

2. Once in Jerusalem, people learn God's ways with the intention of walking in them. That seems like – heaven! People will want to do what God says.
3. God willingly mediates their disputes. Peace will result among nations which go there to acknowledge God. This seems inconceivable but that's what Isaiah said.

When we leave God out of our problems, each side thinks they have the solution, and we fight over the solution—who is going to win? We see it on a large scale politically. But in your home or neighborhood, did you ever get in an argument with someone? I don't mean an easy argument like, where shall we go to dinner tonight, honey. But a major difference of opinion.

Have you ever gotten stuck in disagreement for years over something? Your neighbor's huge oak tree grows well over your property and hangs over your roof and he refuses to prune it, and you are worried it will fall on your house. It does! And he refuses to pay for damages. Or something more serious with a family member. You have just made up your mind. She has made up her mind. There is no changing you or her. You might get along about other things, but not about this subject. You get inflamed just thinking about it.

It's hard to crack those kinds of differences.

Imagine that degree of disagreement being resolved by someone. Imagine change in the opinions of people's political persuasions.

Isaiah means that intensity of disagreement is resolved by God. He says when God mediates, our heads are lifted beyond ourselves so much so that all parties are able to be reconciled. They willingly exchange their weapons for gardening tools—war implements are transformed into implements of life, sustenance, and abundance.

- It's like Esau embracing Jacob.
- It's like heading for divorce court and then renewing your marriage vows instead.
- It's like being re-employed, after being fired.

No more war; no more dispute; life for God's people becomes how Revelation describes it, a place with streets of gold and gates of jasper. There is peace. It's unbelievable.

There's actually a non-profit company called Raw Tools whose mission is to "Disarm Hearts, Forge Peace." This organization makes useful tools out of weapons. If you want to turn your gun into them, they will make a garden tool out of it and send it back to you in its newfound purpose.

They take Isaiah seriously!

These are all realities for the "Day of the Lord." You have heard of the Day of Judgment. Isaiah says, it's a day when we will "walk in the light of the Lord." (v. 5)

Are you looking forward to that day? When you embrace God fully, the future rewards are fantastic!

Our prophet Isaiah goes on. He turns to the people. He can see that *the people are nowhere near ready*. We are in trouble with God, he says. Let's hear it: Isaiah 2:6-11

Have you ever prayed for someone and said, "Don't let them die, Lord, they are not ready to face you." I think that's the intent of Isaiah. They are striving to make a good life for themselves. But they get caught up in their own work. Their good work becomes an idol.

Success, possessions, wealth becomes the end in itself. Let's look at some of our potential modern-day idols. (slide 71)

As Woody and Buzz Lightyear say, "Idols! Idols everywhere!"

So why is Isaiah so concerned about idols? Why does he judge Israel as idolatrous?

Their land is full of silver and gold;
Their land is full of horses and chariots;
Their land is full of idols;
They bow down to the work of their hands.

The problem is that when we idolize something, it becomes first. It's like having toys we are not willing to share.

Children teach us a valuable lesson. They think they can't live without the toy. They are inclined to cling to it. Or fight over it. Or hide it. They think they have to have it to be happy. Relationships become strained.

But in that state are they flourishing? Is life good when they are in a fight? Are they growing and maturing? Are they living in a state of reality? After all, the children did not obtain the toy on their own; it was a gift. The child should freely share what he has freely received.

This spills over into adult culture.

We get used to striving for success, fighting for domination, and often refuse to share, taking all credit for attaining the gain.

This is not flourishing and God desires for God's children to flourish!

God's way is the better way.

When we listen to God about what is meaningful in life and what is not, what we have control over and what we do not, we gain everything.

Isaiah says on the Day of the Lord, all the idols will be shown for what they are. They will be like a pile of toys on the floor—powerless and meaningless.

That's why God tells us the truth. That's why God saves us. That's why God asks us to follow Jesus and his ways. In that way we are the bride of Christ, ready to receive his gifts.

On the Day of the Lord we will be humbled. All that is false will be realized. Why? To see the truth about idols.

How much better to learn the truth now. How much better to be free of idols.

In this season of distressing political opinions, let us take Isaiah to heart:

“Don't put your trust in mere humans. They are as frail as breath. What good are they? (2:22).”

Nations will stream into Jerusalem seeking the wisdom of God so they can learn to walk in His ways, for God is willing to teach us. Are you willing to grasp His truth? It will be the best promise you ever embraced.

AMEN