

Sermon for November 27, 2022 – Advent 1

Isaiah 2:1–5 (EHV)

Come, Lord Jesus, King over the nations!

- 1) He calls to the nations through his Church.
- 2) He will rule his people in peace.

¹ This is the message that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² This will take place in the latter days: The mountain of the LORD's house will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it like a river. ³ Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. Then he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For from Zion the law will go out, and the LORD's word will go out from Jerusalem. ⁴ He will judge between the nations, and he will mediate for many peoples. Then they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into blades for trimming vines. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore. ⁵ O house of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Outside the United Nations building in New York stands a statue of a man beating a sword into a plowshare – symbolizing humanity's desire for peace. Sadly, humanity is incapable of living in harmony. Why? Because sinful pride and selfishness permeate our nature – moving world leaders to follow Satan's enticements to do wicked things of which no good can come. And it's not just world leaders that have this problem; we all do. Why else do we do the boneheaded things that hurt others – especially the ones we love?

The United Nations was formed with the hope that some world governing body could help maintain peace among the nations. That plan hasn't worked out so well. Why not? Because it does not address the root problem of humanity: sin. Thankfully there is a King who is not only able to save us from the evil that enslaves us but also, by reconciling us to God, bring lasting peace between all people from every nation who look to him in faith

With the prophet Isaiah as our guide, let us consider Jesus' kingdom under the theme: **Come, Lord Jesus, King over the nations!** 1) He calls to the nations through his Church. 2) He will rule his people in peace.

Part One He calls to the nations through His Church

The prophet Isaiah lived in the nation of Judah some 700 years before Jesus' birth. Humanly speaking, Judah was prosperous, and its people fared well. However, spiritually speaking, the nation was rotting away from the inside as they joined in worshipping the gods of the nations around them – forsaking the covenant their forefathers made with the LORD at Mount Sinai.

Judgement was coming, and one of Isaiah's tasks was to warn God's people about it. However, the LORD's impending wrath did not negate the fact that He still loved His people. Faithful to the covenant he had made with Abraham, the LORD would redeem them - calling his elect from every nation to graciously grant them the peace he promised the patriarchs.

¹ *This is the message that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

The terms "Judah" and "Jerusalem" symbolize the New Testament Church. Just as the LORD comforted his Old Testament people with his presence through his temple in Jerusalem, so the LORD comforts us, reminding us that he stands in our midst; as Jesus once said: "*Where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am among them.*"ⁱ

Understand, then, that the vision Isaiah saw is about us. And it's a message that God wants us to take to heart – so much so that he had another prophet, Micah, proclaim in his writings the same message our sermon text proclaims.ⁱⁱ

Isaiah writes: ² *This will take place in the latter days...* The biblical era known as "the latter days" began at Jesus' birth and will end at his return to judge the world.ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, it is the era in which we are living. What does the LORD say will happen during that time?

The mountain of the LORD's house will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it like a river.

To understand this verse, you need to know that the Lord's temple was built on a small hill-like mountain in Jerusalem. It wasn't all that high compared to the other mountains around it. But the temple mount was important because the LORD promised to meet his people there. All the sacrifices the Jews offered him on that mountain foreshadowed the once and for all sacrifice the Saviour would make for the sins of the world.

Sadly, when Isaiah recorded his vision, many Jews worshipped other gods – idols – on the hills surrounding Jerusalem – forsaking the LORD.^{iv} But a time was coming when the LORD's mountain – that is, the worship of Him alone – would be revealed as the one true glorious religion. When did that happen? When Jesus came in fulfillment of all prophecy! Just outside Jerusalem, he offered the once and for all sacrifice for sin that reconciled humanity to God. Not only that, but He rose from the dead to prove all sin has been forgiven.

Jesus came to establish the worship of the LORD as the only true religion. No other god comes close to offering the forgiveness, life, and salvation that the LORD offers us through faith in Jesus. Even though his spiritual temple – the Church – started as a humble band of Jewish disciples, the LORD has used their testimony to gather people from every nation around the globe into his kingdom for salvation. History reinforces this truth as Christianity has grown and permeated the world, unlike any other religion.

And what, exactly, moved God's elect from every nation to forsake their idols and worship Christ? The glorious Gospel that Christ proclaims through His Church's ministry, as Isaiah writes:

³ *Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. Then he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For from Zion the law will go out, and the LORD's word will go out from Jerusalem.*

The word translated as "law" in our text is better understood as "instruction." Why are the people streaming to Christ? Because ever since Pentecost, King Jesus has been using His Church's Gospel ministry to proclaim his saving truth: calling all people to repentance and faith. And the peoples have been responding! Hearing the voice of their Good Shepherd in the Gospel, they come running to Him.^v Repenting of their sins, they receive the Gospel in faith and joy. Understanding that the devil and his allies will stop at nothing to try to prevent us from listening to Jesus, God's people encourage one another: *"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. Then he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths."*

Nothing is more wonderful, joyous, and relevant than the Gospel of Christ! Through it, the LORD rules our hearts and His Spirit guides us in His ways. He gives us a great perspective concerning our lives on this earth—revealing the glorious future that awaits his believers. Because we are his blood-bought children, we understand that we don't have to strive against each other in this dog-eat-dog world. Instead, we pity our enemies – praying for their conversion, so they aren't lost in hell. As our LORD gave up everything to love us while we were at enmity with him,^{vi} we are moved to reflect his love to all people^{vii}; bearing each other's burdens^{viii} and forgiving one another just as he forgave us^{ix}.

You see, Christ not only came to reconcile us to himself but to reconcile us to each other through faith in him^x. With our sins forgiven and selfishness replaced by the new spirit he placed in us at our baptisms, we can't help but love each other. We recognize fellow Christians as our brothers and sisters in God's family – as fellow citizens of heaven.^{xi}

Sadly, we all have a sinful nature that will remain inside us until we die. Because this is the case, we often find ourselves acting selfishly and sinning against each other.^{xii} Enticed by the world, we often stray from our merciful, Shepherd King.

Thankfully the LORD sends fellow Christians to call us back to repentance and faith. They encourage us to come and learn from the LORD in His Word. He cleanses us from all sin through his Gospel by connecting us to the righteousness he won for us. Encouraged by our fellow Christians, we fight the good fight of faith and encourage one another – calling the world to repentance and looking forward to the day Christ will fulfill his promise to bring everlasting peace to His Church.

Part Two: He will rule his people in peace.

Isaiah continues: ⁴ *He will judge between the nations, and he will mediate for many peoples. Then they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into blades for trimming vines. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore.*

Our King Jesus is coming soon to judge the nations.^{xiii} All who believe in him will receive everlasting life.^{xiv} Those who refuse to believe will be cast into the endless lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.^{xv} On that day, Jesus will right every wrong the Church suffered for his name's sake. He will execute justice on this earth.

On that day, something else will happen: peace between all nations and peoples will be established because Jesus will mediate between them. Just think about what this means!

Historically Christians have often fought against other Christians – not by choice, but simply because of how wicked this earth is. For example, I have met many German Christians who were forced to fight for Hitler's army in World War Two – even though they wanted nothing to do with that man. I have also met American Christians who fought against Hitler's army. Christians shot at Christians – all because of the pride and wickedness of an evil ruler. I am sure it is no different today in Ukraine. Russian Christians who want nothing to do with the war are being caught up in the mobilization to fight against their Christian brothers in Ukraine. Such is the state of this wicked world!

But when Christ comes again on the last day, all that is evil will be cast away. Sin's curse will be lifted, and we will truly see each other as the brothers and sisters that we are – from every tribe, people, language, and nation.^{xvi} Because there will be no selfishness or sin, there will be no need for conflict or war. All prejudices and hatred will be gone. There indeed will be peace on earth. Why? All because of the peace our King Jesus established between God and us through His sacrifice on the cross.^{xvii} By reconciling us to the Father, he also reconciled us to each other. How so? Because He paid for all sins, including our sins against each other.

Oh, how beautiful that day will be when our king fulfills His promise of the total peace the prophets foretold he would bring. Until that day, let us make every effort to join with the rest of His Church in inviting others and encouraging each other to *come, and ... walk in the light of the LORD*.

Let us also lift our eyes to heaven and pray: **Come, Lord Jesus, King over the nations!** Bless the ministry of your Church as you call to the nations through her. Come soon to fulfill your promise to rule over your people from every corner of the globe in everlasting peace. Amen.

ⁱ Matthew 28:20 EHV

ⁱⁱ Cf. Micah 4:1-3

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Hebrews 1:2, Acts 2:17, Matthew 25:31

^{iv} Cf. Isaiah 65:7

^v Cf. John 10:12-18

^{vi} Cf. Romans 5:8-11

^{vii} Cf. Matthew 5:44-45

^{viii} Cf. Galatians 6:2

^{ix} Cf. Colossians 3:13

^x Cf. Ephesians 2:14-20

^{xi} Cf. Ephesian 4:1-16

^{xii} Cf. Romans 7:14 -25

^{xiii} Cf. Matthew 25:31-46

^{xiv} Cf. John 6:47

^{xv} Cf. Matthew 25:41

^{xvi} Cf. Revelation 7:9

^{xvii} Cf. Revelation 5:9