

Where is the Advent hope?

Isa. 55: 1-5

The headlines and news stories lately are discouraging. Bombings, shootings, invasions, looming 25% Tariffs - angry political debates, caustic commentary - it all leaves us wondering: how did humanity ever come to this? How did we ever sink so low? Is there any reason for hope?

But everyday we use that small, magical word—hope. What is hope? I'd define hope like this: **Hope is a vision for better days that changes us in the present. Hope is a vision for better days. There's something up ahead, around the corner, in sight, and it's good.**

But that good future isn't just abstract, because it reaches in and transforms us in the present.

But the vision for a better future isn't based in our wishful thinking or even our faith in that future; instead, the promises point to a specific person. Hope is not wrapped up in a season or a program or in a new job or a better spouse or a bigger house. Hope is wrapped up in a Person.

"Come and Be Satisfied!" (Isaiah 55:1-5)

Today we return to Isaiah 55 to a long-held Invitation. An invitation that still stands. The Lord is extending an invitation to us. He is saying to each one of us today: "Come and eat!" "Come and drink!" "Come and Be Satisfied!"

"Come and be satisfied!" This is the message God is speaking to us today through his prophet Isaiah. Our text is the Old Testament Reading from Isaiah 55. Listen again to the first part of this text: "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."

Here in these verses we see several things about the Lord's invitation.

1. We see who are the ones to whom the Lord issues this invitation.
2. We see how much it costs to come and buy the rich food and thirst-quenching drink the Lord offers us.
3. And we see the folly of going after those things that do not satisfy.

It is clear that that invitation is has no time limit. We are still being invited even today!

Because:

1. amidst this chaos in which we live...

2. amidst the anguish that millions of families are dealing
3. amidst the fear, the depression, the darkness, the despair, and the sense of hopelessness...

God's Word continues to ring out with the ultimate message of hope for the future

Similarly, in Jeremiah chapter 29 we are told: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

A hope and a future...

Isn't this exactly what we need right here and right now as we enter another season of Adent?

Because there is no doubt that life that is not related to hope for a better future lead to tragic consequences.

A young man who was involved in a struggle on the corner of a busy intersection said, "I ain't got nothing to live for. Just kill me, I don't care."

Another young man just started shooting on a busy highway:

The news reported that - "A man was on his way to work early Tuesday morning, travelling on the eastbound lanes of Highway 401 in Mississauga, when he encountered a person walking on the busy freeway.

"You clearly see just a guy run from the left-hand side all the way to the right-hand side. And you think nothing of it until you see a gun pointed at you, and it's fight or flight mode," a man CP24 agreed to only identify as Mike on Wednesday afternoon.

His dash cam, which did not have audio, captured a man in a grey hoodie in the live lanes of traffic, approaching vehicles and appearing to point a gun at them.

"My first decision was duck down, put it into third gear, and get the hell out of there," Mike said. However, an accident a few metres ahead prevented him from quickly fleeing.

That's sad - our world desperately needs a sense of hope—a vision.

Fifty-six years ago, on the night before his assassination in Memphis in 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. articulated his vision:

"I've been to the mountain top; I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but one day, my people will be free."

Hope is not something we can just wish into being though!

Mahatma Gandhi - **"Be the change that you wish to see in the world."**

What will that change look like?

Paul writing to the Ephesians says 4:31 (NLT2) - Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

And what does kindness look like?

Kindness is being more than just being nice. It is being considerate, friendly, generous, COMPASSIONATE, selfless, caring, and understanding.

So are we willing to make an investment in the future even in a time when our accustomed ways of life are not aligning?

Probably not, if God is left out of the equation.

And how often do we leave God out of the equation? Yet it is possible to do so.

But this is no way to live, this is no way to have hope, this is no way to have a future!!!

As Paul wrote to the Philippian Church, "But our citizenship is in heaven."

And Christ told us that although we are in the world, we are not of the world.

But that spiritual emphasis doesn't take away the reality that many Christians deal:

1. Many of us feel the stress of financial burdens, and bills not yet paid.
2. Many of us are lonely due to the passing of a loved one.
3. Many of us live in the uncertainty about how a health situation will end

In the movie, "As Good As It Gets" Jack Nicholson is walking through the waiting room of a psychiatrist's office.

The people sitting in the room are looking miserable, feeling the weight of the world on their shoulders, suffering from all kinds of mental problems that are often a part of our existence on this earth, and Nicholson with his glaring look asks the question, "What if this is as good as it gets?"

Thankfully, the Good News is that as Christians, we have the hope and are given the assurance that this is not as good as it gets.

Jesus made this ultimately clear when He took our sins on the Cross, died the death we deserve, and rose to eternal life. That opened the door to hope. There is something to look forward to.

But if we were to come back to our central text of Isaiah's invitation in Isa. 55, the question remains - So why do people go after other things that cannot satisfy like the Lord's gifts can? It really doesn't make any sense, but still, that's what people do. They look all over the place for things they think will satisfy their hunger and thirst. But nothing else can do the job. "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?" Why indeed? All

these other avenues that people go down are dead ends. They will end in death. They may give momentary pleasure, but they will end in death.

The truth is, people are always searching, searching for things that will make them happy. And when those things become more important than God, or they take the place of the one true God, they become an idol.

Some people look to other gods through some man-made substitutes.

Some people run after sinful pleasure to be their ultimate god. They seek their happiness in illicit sex, adultery, in drunkenness or drugs, in greed or gluttony or wrongful gain or power. Anything to appease their appetites and give them a high.

Some look to politics, whether left or right, to provide the answer to their problems. Some look to nature, the environment, and they worship the creation rather than the Creator. All these wrong turns. None of these answers will satisfy in the end.

But even good things can become an idol. Prosperity, pleasure, health, wealth, recreation, romance, a nice home, family, fun times can all shift us away from God. Even these good things, these good gifts from God, cannot ultimately satisfy. Don't let them become an end in themselves. Jesus says, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

"Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food." Yes, today, hear and heed the Lord's gracious invitation, and come and eat and drink. This is rich food indeed! Come today and receive Christ's very body and blood here in this Supper. This bread is his body, given for you. This cup is his blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

So today, the Lord is saying to you: "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live." Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. Come, you who have no money; come, buy and eat without money and without price. Come and eat what is good; delight yourself in rich food. Yes, come and be satisfied!

Amen!