

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



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Rooted in the Reformed tradition, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is committed to the formation of women and men for theologically reflective ministry and to scholarship in service to the global Church of Jesus Christ.

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Spiritual Formation Certificate

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Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology

Miller Summer Youth Institute

Metro-Urban Institute

World Mission Initiative

Zeitah Excavations

FACULTY

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 15, 2018

SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 8:1-15

1 Then the LORD said to me, Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, “Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz,” 2 and have it attested for me by reliable witnesses, the priest Uriah and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah. 3 And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; 4 for before the child knows how to call ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria.” 5 The LORD spoke to me again: 6 “Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah; 7 therefore, the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks; 8 it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

9 Band together, you peoples, and be dismayed;
listen, all you far countries;
gird yourselves and be dismayed;
gird yourselves and be dismayed!

10 Take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught;
speak a word, but it will not stand,
for God is with us.”

11 For the LORD spoke thus to me while his hand was strong upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: 12 “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. 13 But the LORD of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over—a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Erin Davenport LSW '05, Parish Associate, Parkwood Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. / Director, Miller Summer Youth Institute

Isaiah is warning the people of the two Kingdoms of Israel that the Southern Kingdom will fall to the Assyrians in less than a year (less time than it takes for a child to learn to speak). Isaiah and the Israelites are living in a time of political chaos that feels like it has dramatic and lasting historical significance. He is living and speaking in a time of split kingdoms, split narratives, split alliances—and everyone is full of dread. The Lord speaks to Isaiah and says in verses 12 and 13, “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears or be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”

Like Isaiah, our hope is not in the kingdoms and powers of this world, but in Immanuel, God with us. Our hope, security, and future are found in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

Lord, give me the voice of a prophet today. Help me to speak hope into the midst of chaos, love into the midst of hate, and joy into the midst of sorrow. Thank you for reminding me again and again that you are God, and even when it seems that everything is splitting apart, you remain steadfast and holy. Amen.

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