

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 17, 2023

SCRIPTURE

AMOS 9:11-15

11 On that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen,
and repair its breaches,
and raise up its ruins,
and rebuild it as in the days of old;
12 in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,
says the LORD who does this.
13 The time is surely coming, says the LORD,
when the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps,
and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,

and all the hills shall flow with it.

14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

15 I will plant them upon their land,
and they shall never again be plucked up
out of the land that I have given them,
says the LORD your God.

DEVOTION

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In Barbara Kingsolver's most recent novel, *Demon Copperhead*, she explores in vivid detail the social, structural, and moral crises of our contemporary era. The protagonist—named Damon but called “Demon”—is shuffled from home to home by social services after losing his parents. Unable to make meaningful attachments and without any adults capable and willing to care for him, Demon falls from the graces afforded most kids, finding himself facing a capricious and cruel world all by himself. Kingsolver's narration shines a flood light on the parts of everyday life in late-capitalism we would like to ignore. The economic pressures on families press parents into impossible choices between rent and food, parental neglect and a wage. Corrupt public officials and corporate greed siphon resources away from the poor, leaving behind failing schools, substandard health care, and lost opportunity. An avalanche of bad news that can lead to cynicism.

In our text for today, the prophet Amos refuses the moral paralysis or cynicism that can come from an honest assessment of the suffering around us. A time will come when God will take sides and rebuild what has been torn down, when God will restore the land to abundance, and Israel will flourish. This promise hangs in the air as a counter-narrative, an imaginative construal that invites impatience with the current order. It is an impatience picked up by the Hebrew prophets who come after, an impatience manifest in a Nazareth synagogue when a young rabbi reads “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives.” It is also the impatience that characterizes our Advent hope—may the light shine out from this darkness, and may we have eyes to see. May our hearts learn hope. Amen.

PRAYER (TODAY'S MORNING PSALM, PSALM 24)

1 The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
2 for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.
3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
5 They will receive blessing from the LORD,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.
6 Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah
7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
8 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory. Selah

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