

Tuesday, December 18th, 2012

The Rev. Dr. Carolyn Jones '77, Director of Field Education. Distinguished Alum '05

Scripture:

Isaiah 11: 1-9

1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

6 The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

9 They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

Devotional:

Looking back on the wearisome season of political campaigning so recently ended, it's tempting to imagine how different things might have been if the agenda for our elections had been guided by Isaiah's description of the ideal ruler, rather than by partisan politics. The trouble is that,

since Isaiah 11 is most often read as part of our observance of Advent/Christmas, we tend to associate the prophet's words only with Jesus -- not with all who govern.

As unlikely as it is that any of us will ever be a king, we probably will be called upon to exercise leadership in our family, community, place of business, or church. According to Isaiah (11:2), the Spirit blesses those set apart for leadership with intellectual qualities and practical skills which are grounded in the "knowledge and fear of the Lord." The judgments of such leaders are marked by justice and righteousness -- themes which appear in all of this day's readings, describing the character of God and/or the hope of God's people.

That hope is renewed each year at Christmas as we celebrate the faithfulness of God who, in Jesus, opened the door to a Peaceable Kingdom in which the peoples of the world live in harmony with one another and with the created order. And to that end, God is working still . . .

Prayer:

Guide your people, O God, as we seek to make connections between the witness of Scripture and our own calls to discipleship. May the prophecy of Isaiah rekindle our hope, and the life of your Son be our inspiration, as we offer our prayer in his name. Amen.