Advent Devotional December 8, 2026

Scripture

Isaiah 5:18-25

18 Woe to those who drag iniquity along with cords of falsehood,
who drag sin along as with cart ropes,
19 who say, "Let him make haste;
let him speed his work
that we may see it;
let the plan of the Holy One of Israel hasten to fulfillment,
that we may know it!"
20 Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!
21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes
and shrewd in their own sight!
22 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine
and valiant at mixing drink,
23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe
and deprive the innocent of their rights!

24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will become rotten,
and their blossom go up like dust,
for they have rejected the instruction of the Lord of hosts
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them;
the mountains quaked,
and their corpses were like refuse
in the streets.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Steve Shussett '93

There are methods of pottery that require the use of a large outdoor kiln and a community of potters to maintain the fire over several days. Despite the long hours, no one can open the kiln's door to check the clay's progress. Any change in temperature or pressure will damage or destroy the pottery within. You just have to wait, and what eventually emerges is rarely as you imagined it would be.

How long had the people of Israel waited for the Holy One's plan to be fulfilled? God had been with humans since Day Six, through sea and desert, good times and bad. But once again, in the midst of turmoil, people just wanted God to get on with it.

Here we are, so many years later. Perhaps, wanting our turmoil to end, we think, "How long, O Lord; how long?" But more likely, we don't even wonder anymore. It's not so much doubting that Jesus will come again, we just don't think about it very much.

But Advent calls on us to think about it, to consider the God who is, was, and is to come. Waiting is hard, and yes, we may want to open the kiln's door, to *know*. But we can't provoke God into acting more quickly or speed up Jesus' timetable. We can, however, tend to the Spirit's fire, in ourselves and others, and give to the community that has given to us. We can trust that in God's ultimate plan nothing will be damaged or destroyed. We can trust that what God has promised is beyond our imagination.

Prayer

Holy One, Your Spirit causes our hearts to burn within us, and someday Your grace will consume the world. For now, however, through worship, prayer, and service, feed the fire within us and others, that an ember of trust in You may always burn. In Christ we pray, amen.