Advent Devotional December 3, 2026

Scripture

Isaiah 2:5-22

5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord!

6 You have forsaken your people,
the house of Jacob,
for they are full of diviners from the East
and of soothsayers like the Philistines,
and they clasp hands with foreigners.
7 Their land is filled with silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.
8 Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.
9 And so people are humbled,
and everyone is brought low—
[[do not forgive them!
10 Enter into the rock,
and hide in the dust
from the terror of the Lord
and from the glory of his majesty.]]
11 The haughty eyes of people shall be brought low,
and the pride of everyone shall be humbled,
and the Lord alone will be exalted on that day.
12 For the Lord of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up and high;
13 against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of Bashan;
14 against all the high mountains
and against all the lofty hills;
15 against every high tower
and against every fortified wall;
16 against all the ships of Tarshish
and against all the highly prized vessels.
17 The haughtiness of people shall be humbled,
and the pride of everyone shall be brought low,
and the Lord alone will be exalted on that day.
18 The idols shall utterly pass away.
19 Enter the caves of the rocks

and the holes of the ground,
from the terror of the Lord
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.
20 On that day people will throw away
to the moles and to the bats
their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
which they made for themselves to worship,
21 to enter the caverns of the rocks
and the clefts in the crags,
from the terror of the Lord
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.
22 [[Turn away from mortals,
who have only breath in their nostrils,
for of what account are they?]]

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Scott Dennis '13

Isaiah invites us to behold the path that God desires for us as well as the path we choose when we turn away from God, only later seeing its disastrous consequences. Isaiah reflects on the dualism we feel in God's presence: glory and terror. Our reading reminds us that God calls us to walk in his light while simultaneously warning us against the darkness of human pride. This begins when Isaiah looks forward to the time when all nations shall stream to the mountain of the Lord to learn his ways, but it ends by drawing our attention to the sin that prevents us from living under God's reign: idolatry and self-exaltation.

In verses 5-22, Isaiah confronts our temptation to trust in human strength by rejecting the world's signs of morality and knowledge, wisdom and prestige, power and wealth, possessions and achievements. This happens when we turn away from the creator to worship what we have created. Yet, Isaiah foresees the coming of Jesus—that day of the Lord when all human pride shall be humbled, for "the Lord alone will be exalted" (v. 11). This is the coming day against all other days, for it is that day upon which the hinge of history swings and by which all other days are measured, counted, and compared. God stands against the strongest that the world has on offer, brushing aside our best, strongest, and greatest.

Yet, what in the world does this unnatural Advent reading have to do with our journey to Christmas?

Isaiah's message remains deeply relevant for the church: human hearts continually seek substitutes for God, placing our confidence in power, security, knowledge, or success rather than in Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord. The church has long confessed that Jesus is the one who both restores communion between God and humankind and reveals that God's wisdom and salvation come not through greatness but through God's self-giving. All earthly idols eventually fail; God alone remains eternal, holy, and worthy of worship. May we hold onto Isaiah's vision of repentance and faith as we proceed to Christmas.

Prayer

Holy Lord, Your spokesman Isaiah calls us to abandon our idols and walk in Your light. Help us see Your light in Jesus, the coming Christ child, for His kingdom cannot be shaken and His reign never fails. Help us to trust Jesus alone to receive all our fears, our hopes, and our worship from this day forward. Amen.