

December 9, 2016

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Scripture

Isaiah 7:10-25

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?"

¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. ¹⁷The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah - the king of Assyria." ¹⁸On that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the sources of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures. ²⁰On that day the Lord will shave with a razor hired beyond the River - with the king of Assyria - the head and the hair of the feet, and it will take off the beard as well. ²¹On that day one will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, ²²and will eat curds because of the abundance of milk that they give; for everyone that is left in the land shall eat curds and honey. ²³On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. ²⁴With bow and arrows one will go there, for all the land will be briers and thorns; ²⁵and as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not go there for fear of briers and thorns; but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

Psalm 148

¹Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!

²Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!

³Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!

⁴Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!

⁵Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created.

⁶He established them forever and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

⁷Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,

⁸fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!

⁹Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
¹⁰Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!
¹¹Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
¹²Young men and women alike,
old and young together!
¹³Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
¹⁴He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the Lord!

Devotional

The word “Immanuel” in Isaiah’s prophecy explains why Advent is the season of solidarity. Just as we share time and space during Advent season by reading familiar narratives of Jesus’ birth, singing carols and hymns about the baby Jesus, breaking bread together and buying each other gifts to commemorate the greatest of gifts to the world, so the Divine, being poured into human flesh, shared time and space with us by living “among us.” Christ joined in radical solidarity with us: in service, supper, supplication, suffering, sin, sanctification, salvation and Spirit. It is this same sense that the psalmist uses as an invitation and imperative for all creation to join together to praise the One who created all and who relentlessly loves and seeks to reconcile all. Advent reminds us that Christ continues to join in solidarity with us, in each breath through the Holy Spirit, for God’s good, merciful, just, gracious, and redemptive purposes.

Prayer

As we seek you, God, and wait expectantly to celebrate with great joy the anniversary of Christ’s birth, help us to hear how we are being called during Advent and always to stand in solidarity with those experiencing injustice and oppression, knowing that you show your face in unexpected ways and places—like the finite and fragile face of a babe in a manger all those years ago. Amen.