

Advent Devotional December 23, 2018

Scripture

Isaiah 33:17-22

¹⁷Your eyes will see the king in his beauty;
they will behold a land that stretches far away.

¹⁸Your mind will muse on the terror:
“Where is the one who counted?
Where is the one who weighed the tribute?
Where is the one who counted the towers?”

¹⁹No longer will you see the insolent people,
the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend,
stammering in a language that you cannot understand.

²⁰Look on Zion, the city of our appointed festivals!
Your eyes will see Jerusalem,
a quiet habitation, an immovable tent,
whose stakes will never be pulled up,
and none of whose ropes will be broken.

²¹But there the LORD in majesty will be for us
a place of broad rivers and streams,
where no galley with oars can go,
nor stately ship can pass.

²²For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our ruler,
the LORD is our king; he will save us.

Devotional

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Are you feeling besieged!? Are you overwhelmed by To-Do lists, activities and commitments to family, friends, or at church? Are you feeling under attack spiritually or being threatened physically? Are you facing discrimination, exploitation, or oppression? Are you engulfed by grief? Is your heart especially burdened for others experiencing any of the above?

As we near the end of Advent, a season that for many of us is a flurry of activity, and approach that day when we celebrate the first coming of our Lord, you are invited to pause . . . Pause. Breathe. Look up and behold the King in his beauty, the majesty of our Lord!

Many scholars place today's Scripture reading in the context of the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians in 701 BC, during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah. Jerusalem was able to withstand the threat, in part due to the foresight of Hezekiah to make sure the city was provided with a reliable source of water. This detail is actually supported by both Scripture and archaeology, with the find of the Siloam Tunnel Inscription.

In this passage of Scripture, however, we see more than a single spring as the source of water. Instead, “there the Lord in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams,” where no other powers that might threaten or harm us can come near. In fact, those previously under siege are invited to “muse” over the terror that is now gone: those who sought to extort, demand, oppress, and attack—insolent people, voices bragging or speaking nonsense. Further, we are invited to “Look on Zion,” a place of gathering and celebration, to “see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation.” It is a place of refuge, “an

immovable tent," a strong covering, indestructible, a place of tranquility, with our Lord at its center. "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; He will save us"!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for being with us when we are worn, weary, and besieged. As we prepare to celebrate your first coming, may we also be reminded of the peace, joy, and healing in fullness ahead, in your presence, when you come again. Amen.