

Advent Devotional December 15, 2022

Scripture

Isaiah 9:18-10:4

*18 For wickedness burned like a fire,
consuming briars and thorns;
it kindled the thickets of the forest,
and they swirled upward in a column of smoke.*

*19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts
the land was burned,
and the people became like fuel for the fire;
no one spared another.*

*20 They gorged on the right but still were hungry,
and they devoured on the left but were not satisfied;
they devoured the flesh of their own kindred;*

*21 Manasseh devoured Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,
and together they were against Judah.
For all this his anger has not turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.*

*10 Woe to those who make iniquitous decrees,
who write oppressive statutes,
2 to turn aside the needy from justice
and to rob the poor of my people of their right,
to make widows their spoil
and to plunder orphans!*

*3 What will you do on the day of punishment,
in the calamity that will come from far away?*

*To whom will you flee for help,
and where will you leave your wealth,*

*4 so as not to crouch among the prisoners
or fall among the slain?*

*For all this his anger has not turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.*

Devotional

The Rev. Jelty Ochotan '11

This contemplation cannot be separated from the initial reading in Isaiah 9:1-17 and the reading after, because there is a very strong and deep connection about God's mighty omnipotence to punish wickedness as a sign of his love for his chosen people. God does not absolve any of his people from wickedness, because wickedness is not the identity of God. The picture of wickedness is like a person who is hungry and is never content. Everything is eaten up but nothing is satisfying. How many wicked ways have destroyed us today? Racism in all forms, school shootings, worsening of environmental pollution. Nothing can be rejoiced in these matters.

Are there still unfair decisions between us? A despicable decision? The weak do not get justice, the rights of the poor are being seized, stolen properties, being orphans?

The way of wickedness must be destroyed so that it will not destroy God's people in the slightest. Wickedness can be ceased through the judgment of God's love in various ways. The annihilation of

wickedness and condemnation of the wicked are signs of God's judgment for the ungodly and his love that liberates his people. This year's Advent celebration delivers a profound message that the coming of Jesus frees his people from the path of wickedness and leads them to the path of salvation.

Prayer

O Jesus, your coming frees your people from the ways of wickedness. Help us to understand which is the way of wickedness and which is your way of salvation. We are often blind to the path that leads us into judgment. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.