

## **Advent Devotional December 25, 2023 – Christmas Day**

### **Scripture**

#### **Micah 4:1-5, 5:2-4**

*1 In days to come  
the mountain of the Lord's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised up above the hills.  
Peoples shall stream to it,  
2 and many nations shall come and say:  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths."  
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
3 He shall judge between many peoples,  
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more;  
4 but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,  
and no one shall make them afraid;  
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.  
5 For all the peoples walk,  
each in the name of its god,  
but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God  
forever and ever.*

*2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.  
3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
then the rest of his kindred shall return  
to the people of Israel.  
4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.  
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth.*

### **Devotion**

**The Rev. Andy Greenhow, Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Directors**

Sometime in the spring of 2016, John Hodgman joked on his podcast that his full-time job was thinking about the musical *Hamilton*, a remark that I found extremely resonant. One song I listened to on repeat was “One Last Time,” in which George Washington informs Alexander Hamilton that he is willingly stepping down from the presidency in order to model the peaceful transition of power. Washington’s farewell address as it is sung dreams lofty dreams for the young American nation, including the hope that “everyone will sit under their own vine and fig tree, and no one will make them afraid.” Washington referenced this Scripture and sentiment often, most notably in a letter outlining his hope that Jews would find a safe home in the United States.

Even then, I thought of myself as a hardened cynic, but I now look back at *Hamilton*-obsessed Andy and cringe. The rise in anti-Semitism, disregard for democratic ideals, contested transfer of power, and so much else leads me to ask how I could have been such a Pollyanna, weeping in my office as I listened to a musical.

But then I remember a remark professor Angela Hancock made in a recent sermon in Hicks Chapel: when holding new babies, people make big promises. And this morning, we are all holding a new baby. So let’s make big promises.

Let us promise to dream eschatological dreams about justice and peace on earth, about the bounty of the earth providing enough for all, about unity and the end of fear—and promise to act in service to those dreams. But for me, the bigger promise will be to dream all of this without embarrassment or self-consciousness. It helps that today, we cradle the fulfillment of these dreams in our arms.

Merry Christmas!

### **Prayer**

Incarnate God, grant us faith to trust the promises you have made, promises that find their fulfillment in your Son. Free us from the shame that prevents us from a wholehearted embrace of your vision for the world. Help us hold the magic of the incarnation in our hearts. Amen.