

Advent Promises: The Light of the Lord
Isaiah 2:1-5

Today we turn the calendar to December and with it dawns the beginning of a new Church Year with Advent. Advent is the season of preparation. A time when we anticipate the birth of our Savior. This year as we prepare we will hear again some of the Advent promises that are at the center of our faith. These promises were first spoken by the prophet Isaiah in the eighth century before the birth of Christ in the midst of political turmoil. Isaiah's words gave hope to the people of God then and continue to offer hope to us today.

Isaiah began his message with this promise:

*In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many people 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.*

The promise is that the days are coming when God will be revealed to us. God will teach us his ways and we will learn to walk in his paths. And those ways will lead to peace. To a world where *"they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks..."* And this world will be revealed to us through the light - the light of the Lord. Isaiah said:

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Jack Jones was a Welsh coal miner's son. In his autobiography, UNFINISHED JOURNEY, he tells about a terrifying incident that occurred when he was a boy. He was in a mine shaft when something went wrong, and the men were obliged to find another way out.

They struggled through a labyrinth of old workings and a stagnant pond. Jack's father, one of the best miners and a devoted parent, took Jack on his back and led his fellow miners over dangerous ground.

In the foul air, the flames of their open lamps began to weaken. "Careful, son, you hold fast round Dad's neck," his father said as they reached the dark water. Slowly he was tracing his way through the murky water which was almost up to his chest.

Across the water, they started up a steep incline. "Won't be long now," he said. After they had climbed for some time, he stopped, knelt and pointed. "Look, son."

Jack saw what seemed to be a bright disc, about the size of a half dollar, on top of what appeared to be a distant mountain.

"That's what we've been looking for, son "the light of the world. Come on!" And the light grew in size as they climbed their way to the world's surface. (<https://sermons.com/sermon/light/1346851>)

Friends, the light of the world is what we are looking for. For the light leads us to Christ, to freedom, to a way forward. It is why a candle is such a potent reminder of the season. The light of the candle - the light of dawn - the light in the distance reminds us there is something more to come - something that holds promise for our lives. Something that the closer we get to it the brighter it shines.

A father and two children, a boy of eight and a girl of ten years, all good swimmers, entered the water of the Atlantic at a New Jersey seashore resort a few summers ago. When some distance from shore, they became separated and the father realized they were being carried out to sea by the tide. He called out to the girl: "Mary, I am going to shore for help. If you get tired, turn on your back. You can float all day on your back. I'll come back for you."

Before long, many searchers in boats were scurrying over the face of the Atlantic Ocean hunting for one small girl, while hundreds of people to whom the news had spread waited anxiously on shore. It was four hours before they found her, far from land. She was calmly swimming on her back and was not at all frightened. Cheers and tears of joy and relief greeted the rescuers with their precious burden as they came to land.

The child took it calmly. She said, "Daddy said he would come for me, and that I could float all day, so I swam and floated, because I knew he would come." (<https://sermons.com/sermon/a-distant-light/1346848>)

Friends, the light of the Lord shining in the distance reminds us that not only did the light of the Lord come into our world twenty one centuries ago but he promised to come back for us in the days to come. The light of the Lord causes us to reflect on the gift from the past but also on the promises of the future. For we believe that Christ will come again. He promised he would and we can live each day in joy knowing that promise.

As those who live in the in-between times - between the past and the future - we are challenged to live our lives daily walking in the ways of the Lord. We are called to walk in the light of the Lord. By living a life of integrity and love following Christ's example.

There is a story that appeared on the web about a church Christmas pageant. The day of the presentation finally arrived. A young girl named Jana was so excited about her part that her parents thought she was to be one of the main characters, though she had not told them what she was to do.

The parents of the children in the pageant were all there and one by one the children took their places. Jana's parents could see the shepherds fidgeting in one corner of the stage which was evidently intended to be a field. Mary and Joseph stood solemnly behind the manger. In the back three young wise men waited impatiently. But still little Jana sat quietly and confidently.

Then the teacher began: "A long time ago, Mary and Joseph had a baby and they named Him Jesus," she said. "And when Jesus was born, a bright star appeared over the stable."

At that cue, Jana got up from her chair, picked up a large tin-foil star, walked behind Mary and Joseph and held the star up high for everyone to see.

When the teacher told about the shepherds coming to see the baby, the three young shepherds came forward and Jana jiggled the star up and down excitedly to show them where to come. When the wise men responded to their cue, she went forward a little to meet them and to lead the way, her face as alight as the real star might have been.

The playlet ended. They had refreshments. On the way home Jana said, with great satisfaction, “I had the main part!”

“You did?” her Mom asked, wondering why she thought that.

“Yes,” she said, “’cause I showed everybody how to find Jesus!”

And ultimately that is what it means to walk in the light. It is to show the world how to find Jesus. (<https://sermons.com/sermon/there-will-be-light/1444173>)

This Advent season may we remember that God’s promise is that the light of the Lord will lead us to the Christ child - to a relationship with the Savior of the world. That Christ has promised that he will come back for us at the end of time. And the main part of this promise is that we - you and me - have been chosen to show others how to find Jesus. And so during this Advent season may the lights of the season remind us to walk in the light of the Lord daily and to be those who lead others into the light of the Lord.