

The Lessons Appointed for Use on  
the

**Second Sunday of Advent**

Year A RCL



Isaiah 11:1-10  
Romans 15:4-13  
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

The Collect

merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

*Amen.*

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the  
wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.  
The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together; and the lion

shall eat straw like the  
ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the  
adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal  
to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his  
dwelling shall be glorious.

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

***Deus, iudicium***

- 1 give the King your justice, O God, \*  
and your righteousness to the King's Son;
- 2 That he may rule your people righteously \*  
and the poor with justice;
- 3 That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, \*  
and the little hills bring righteousness.
- 4 He shall defend the needy among the people; \*  
he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.
- 5 He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, \*  
from one generation to another.
- 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, \*  
like showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his time shall the righteous flourish; \*  
there shall be abundance of peace till the moon  
shall be no more.
- 18 Blessed be the Lord GOD, the God of Israel, \*  
who alone does wondrous deeds!
- 19 And blessed be his glorious Name for ever! \*  
and may all the earth be filled with his glory.  
Amen. Amen.



**Romans 15:4-13**

whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,

and sing praises to your name”;

and again he says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;

and again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples praise him”;

and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,  
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace  
in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the  
power of the Holy Spirit.

## SERMON

**I want a hippopotamus for Christmas.**

**Only a hippopotamus will do.**

**No kangaroos, or rhinoceroses**

**I only like...hippopotamuses**

**And hippopotamuses like me too.**

Christians believe in prayer, but what is prayer? Is it something like asking for a hippopotamus for Christmas – a request that God cause something greatly wished for to happen in your life? Maybe. That's certainly one sort of prayer.

Christians believe in miracles, but what is a miracle? Sometimes, an unlikely thing surprises us and we call that a miracle. A boat full of refugees overturns and all are drowned but one child, who washes up on shore, safe and sound. It's a miracle! Of course, if there were no reason for refugees to be in a small boat in the first place, that would be a bigger miracle, but...



Christians believe in praying for miracles, but, last Sunday, we offered prayers for my friend, Phillip Slone. He passed away Sunday. Where was the miracle for which we prayed? Was our prayer unheard, or have we just forgotten how to be aware of the miracles which surround us? We need to be aware of our limitations, for our world is filled with miracles. That's what I want us to focus on this Advent. Our world is filled with miracles. The danger is that when we pray for a particular miracle we can fail to perceive the miracles which surround us and we are the poorer for it. Happily, our Advent worship time is constructed in such a way as to help us pay attention to the miracles around us. During Advent we focus our attention successively on four miracles: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. These are the real miracles. I call them miracles because the presence of hope, love, joy and peace on an unassuming ball of rock

circling a nuclear hell, is just something beyond my capacity to explain in other terms.

That ball of rock description came from a Science Channel explanation of how the earth came to be. It was fascinating. A ring of debris formed around the sun. Soon, it became a celestial Dodgem Car Derby. One rock smacked into another rock and some of those stuck together to make bigger rocks that smacked other rocks, some of which stuck together until after uncounted eons we had basically a big ball of rock. Then another ball of rock smacked that big ball of rock and made another ring of debris. Long story short, the debris became our moon and the bigger ball of rock became the earth. Problem was – it was just a big ball of rock – just as the astronauts found the moon to be when we visited there longer ago than I'm comfortable with remembering.

The billiard game wasn't over, though. A big ball of

ice whirled out of nowhere and smacked into the earth, and now we had a big ball of wet rock. Then some other balls of rock bearing carbonaceous compounds smacked into it so where once there was a big ball of rock, there was a big ball of mud. This explanation was, to me, very satisfying. It was neat. It explained things. I liked it a lot.

At this point, Sookie announced she had to go out to do her business. As she sniffed for the appropriate place to do it, my eye fell on a peculiar tree in our backyard. It has multiple trunks which twine around each other and is really quite lovely. As I looked at it, though, a thought came to me with such force that it might have been spoken aloud,

**“And then the water and the carbonaceous compounds spontaneously assembled themselves into this tree and the dog that is watering it...”**

It was one of those drop-to-your-knees moments. Miracles have nothing to do with lottery numbers, or even the pain of losing a friend too early. Miracles have to do with God's hand upon His creation. Miracles have to do with God's presence within His creation. Miracles have to do with rocks, ice and carbonaceous compounds born of countless collisions, coming to contain hope, and love, and joy, and peace.

How do we best perceive God's hand upon His creation? One way is to look to Scripture. Our text from Isaiah, we are told, comes from the hand of a man scholars call "Proto-Isaiah". Probably more than you want to know, but those who study these things tell us:

**While it is widely accepted that Isaiah the prophet did not write the entire book, there are good reasons to see parts of chapters 1–39 as stemming from the historic Isaiah ben Amoz, who lived in the Kingdom of Judah**

**during the reigns of four kings from the mid to late 8th century BCE. During this period, Assyria was expanding westward from its origins in modern-day northern Iraq towards the Mediterranean, destroying first present-day Syria in 734–732 BCE, then the Kingdom of Israel in 722–721, and finally subjugating Judah in 701.**

Isaiah ben Amoz wrote in this period. Here is what

he wrote:

A shoot shall come out from the stump  
of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his  
roots.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on  
him,  
the spirit of wisdom and under-  
standing,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the  
fear of the LORD.

His delight shall be in the fear of the  
LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes  
see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge  
the poor,  
and decide with equity for the  
meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of  
his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he  
shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt around  
his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his  
loins.

With the might of Assyria overshadowing them, Isaiah's words must have brought hope to those who feared. His words spoke of a righteous judge from David's lineage who would come with knowledge and might. When Israel and then Judah fell, however, was hope extinguished?

Pay attention! Look closer!

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

Does this sound like the description of a great military leader who will protect them from Assyria or like a description of that which would come to be – God’s presence within His creation? Our church teaches that Isaiah ben Amoz spoke prophetically of the coming of the Christ. How do we best perceive God’s hand upon His creation? One way is to look to Scripture, so Paul wrote these words to his church in Rome:

**Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the**

**scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Attend to Paul's words, church.

AMEN



## BENEDICTION

Paul continued:

**Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.**

Our welcome to each other isn't because we're polite, or because we're generally nice people, nor even because that's the way we were brought up. Our welcome to each other and our visitors is for the glory of God. Our welcome reflects our certainty of the hope of God given to His prophets and become flesh in His son.

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be  
gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give  
you peace.

---

*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

The Bible texts of the Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel lessons are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of

the National Council of the Church of Christ in the USA, and used by permission.

The Collects, Psalms and Canticles are from the Book of Common Prayer, 1979.

Sermon Copyright © 2016 J. Stewart Schneider

---