

THE WEARY WORLD Rejoices

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Isaiah 7.10-16 | December 20, 2020
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week (the 4th Sunday of Advent), we are engaging another of Isaiah's prophecies regarding the coming Messiah. In an interesting exchange between King Ahaz of Judah, Isaiah, and the Lord God, we see the king unable to "ask for anything for Christmas"!

II. Connecting with One Another

- a. Can you remember wanting something for Christmas? What was it? Did you get it? What do you want for Christmas this year?
- b. If you could ask Jesus to perform one miracle in your life, what would it be? Is it hard waiting for God to "answer" our heart's cry?

III. Study the Text

- a. Read and reflect: **Isaiah 7.1-16**. Put yourself in the place of King Ahaz who would have heard Isaiah's words for the first time. How would you receive this news?
- b. Verse 11** What do you make of the Lord's invitation to King Ahaz?
- c. Verse 12** "It is not testing God to do as he says." Thoughts?? Considering **7.1-9**, why do you think God would bid the King of Judah to request a sign? Why do you think Ahaz was uncomfortable asking God for a sign?
- d. King Ahaz is not presented in Scripture as a model of faith. Quite the contrary! He engaged in pagan practices, even installing an idolatrous altar in the temple and sacrificing his own son. Here, however, he's merely indecisive. He will not put his faith in God. It has been written, "Apparently the right encounter begins with God's initiative, with God's offer of a test... God offers a sign. This will clearly become a "test" both of Ahaz's faith and of God's faithfulness. There is a risk. But without risk there is no reward."
- e. Read **Isaiah 7.13-16**. Isaiah declares that the king's indecisiveness is "wearying." This same word is used in **Isaiah 1.14** by the LORD of His feelings about His people's worship. Do you think it is a coincidence that both the king and the general population are "wearying"? How do those in power influence the people they serve - and vice versa?
- f. Have you ever felt like your spiritual life was wearying? How does celebrating the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy - the Advent of Jesus - transform your weariness?



- g. Even though Ahaz is unable or unwilling to ask God for a sign, Isaiah declares one anyway. The sign is simple enough to understand: Aram and Israel will no longer concern Ahaz before the child of the virgin will know between right and wrong. How would that be good news for Ahaz?

IV. Pray

- a. Are there any places in your life where you have lowered your expectations of what God might do—broken relationships, besetting sins, loved ones who continue to reject the grace God extends to them? Ask God to rekindle a flame of hope in your heart.
- b. Continue to pray for the witness of the Church during the on-going COVID pandemic, especially this Christmas season.
- c. Praise God for the gift of His Son Jesus, who is our Savior, Lord, and Messiah. Thank God for being our only source of hope in these days that are filled with so much uncertainty.
- d. Pray for the Good Shepherd community during these unprecedented times in our nation and world. May we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, continue to seek in new and creative ways, to *invite all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God's family.*

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Do you ever doubt that God is in charge of history and of the world today?
- b. What has God promised in your life? Take time to meditate on God's faithfulness and what Scripture tells us about his reliability to fulfill all his promises? What Bible verses come to mind?
- c. Has God ever "tested" you? Have you ever "tested" Him (by trusting in His promises)? How has acting in faith been risky for you? How have you grown in your faith and understanding of Jesus?
- d. Longing. Hoping. Lamenting. Trusting. Resting. This past year has been a mixture of the hard and the beautiful for many of us. We are longing for our Savior. We can rest in the knowledge that He loves us and is with us during these difficult times. Share with one another what these words bring to your heart and mind...
- e. May the saving LOVE of Jesus bring you hope today and always. Let us give thanks that the King of kings and the Lord of lords promises to be Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us"! Merry Christmas to you and your families!!!

Holy God, we lay our lives before you now. We turn off our mobile phones and tablets and give our attention to you totally this Advent season. Surprise us again with unanticipated wonder so we can be awakened to a new and abundant life. We close our eyes to the things that draw us away from you and open them to the joys you share with us each day in small and unassuming ways. We listen with anticipation for your wake-up call, ready to love and serve you with every fiber of our being. All these things we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

