



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School  
1611 E Main St., Watertown, WI 53094

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**First Sunday of Advent**

**December 1, 2019**

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**“God’s Cure for Our Outrage”**

*(Is. 2:4-5)*

Rev. David K. Groth

*“He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and 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 anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD” (Is. 2:4-5).*

*Every day, Everywhere, By Everyone,...sharing  
the grace of the Good Shepherd.*

**Collect:** Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen**

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Outrage has become a common emotion in American life. We indulge ourselves in it more frequently than ever. We're getting accustomed to it: the flying spittle on Capitol Hill and in the White House; the never-ending brawl taking place on social media, where there are no rules of decency or truth, no refs, no restraint. We're becoming more adept at using our words as swords and spears rather than plowshares and pruning hooks.

Think of it, for most of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Americans have been as mad as all get out. It started with the Bush-Gore stalemate election in 2000, followed closely by 9/11, followed by fundamental values on marriage and family changing so very rapidly. The political divide between left and right has become so stark, as if drawn in crayon. There's no nuance anymore, no self-doubt, no room for discussion or debate, no room for compromise or cooperation, no room for mercy. We are the richest of people in the world, and yet so many of us feel victimized, by the government, by our employer, by family or by some stranger we don't even know . . . maybe the customer service rep on the other end of the line. And when we feel victimized, we fly past self-appraisal, self-restraint, self-control, and into a self-righteous rage.

In the Wall Street Journal, Lance Morrow wrote, "A healthy society reserves its outrage for special occasions: Pearl Harbor, say, or the church bombing in Birmingham, Ala., that killed four girls." Today we've "turned outrage into a ragged, all-purpose national reflex."

Similarly, I would say a healthy individual reserves anger for rare, special occasions. Not every bad call at your son's basketball game is a conspiracy of the refs. Not every simple miscommunication at work or church is a sign that you've been disrespected. And no, the person who drives slowly in the left lane on 94 may not be doing so just to ruin your day.

When everyone is outraged, then real grievances are lost in the noise. When there's a chorus of adults yelling at each other over every slight offense, then the small voice of the little child

down the street who really is being neglected or abused an't be heard, and even if it is heard there's little energy leftover to address the child's needs. The adults have used up all their energy in feeling self-pity and in rage and in self-defense. Again, as a country we are so blessed, so rich, and yet so angry. It makes me worry for our country even as I worry about individuals whose resting state seems to be one of anger.

If there's going to be peace, it's going to have to come from outside of us. We are not a peaceful species. We're fighters by nature, demanding our rights, demanding respect. We don't want peace as much as we want to get even. We don't want to forgive as much as we want to settle the score. For all our talk about loving our enemies, we don't do that very often. We don't pray for our enemies. We don't wish our enemies well. We want to see them eat humble pie. So again, if there is to be true peace, it's not going to come from us. It's going to have to come from outside of us.

How refreshing and hopeful then are the words of Isaiah this first Sunday of Advent. "He shall judge between the nations and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nations, neighbor shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

It's a prophecy that speaks not of anger and rage, but of peace, peace with God and peace with one another. It's a peace that only the Messiah can introduce and bring. Only God can usher in a world where "*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 anymore.*" This is a messianic prophecy; it's about the kingdom of God, not any earthly kingdom. It's about God's kingdom, which does not use force to win over people, but rather it uses mercy and grace. It's not a kingdom run by a dictator or autocrat, but by a servant. It's not a kingdom where the leader does the power job on us, pushing us around by means of force. It's a kingdom where the leader becomes weak and vulnerable and suffers obediently even unto death on a cross. It is in this death that we are forgiven. It is in this death that we are given peace,

peace with God and peace with one another.

This forgiveness and salvation and peace with God through Jesus Christ is called the Gospel, and it is available to all people, wherever they might live, whatever their race or nationality. In our text, Isaiah writes, “All the nations shall flow to it.” Those even in the far corners of the earth will be attracted to this Gospel message. Luther wrote, “Moses preaches the Law and is the minister of sin and death. Nobody runs to him. On the contrary, they are terrified [because the Law can only offer sin and death]. Christ, on the other hand, is the Minister of righteousness, of life, and of peace. Therefore, the people flow to Him just as water flows by its own effort and needs no one to push it.”

So what happens then to the anger and rage? Again, in this text, God makes it clear that in the coming kingdom of God, there’s no need for weapons or for the learning of war. No need for aggression. In the coming kingdom of God, there is true peace. Isaiah 11, “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf 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 cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.” It sounds a lot like the bliss of Eden will be restored by the Messiah.

You might be thinking to yourself, that’s nice, Groth, but that’s not the world I live in. I live in a dog eat dog world, a cut-throat world, a world where every weakness is exploited, where if a wolf and a lamb are put together in a stall, only the wolf is going to walk out of it.” Yes, I understand. But this is one of those already, but not yet prophecies. Jesus has already come, and with his death on the cross has already won the victory. But this peace with God and one another is not yet fully manifested, not yet fully evident. Already, but not yet. Paul tells us in Ephesians, “There is peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” But there’s still conflict and rage, war and death. So, clearly, this prophecy hasn’t yet fully come true. We have to wait a little while longer, until Christ comes again. Then all the

articles of war will be useless, mostly because there will be no desire to hurt nor harm. From Isaiah 32: “Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness will be quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”

When Christ comes again, rage and anger will become unknown to us. From Isaiah 65, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things [such as rage and war and death] shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem [heaven] to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days . . . the wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lions shall eat straw like the ox. . . They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,” says the Lord. (vv. 17ff). Clearly, that is a not yet sort of prophecy. It hasn’t yet been fulfilled. It will be fulfilled, however, when Christ comes again.

In the meantime, there’s a wonderful invitation to us, to God’s people in our text, “O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.” This is God’s invitation to his people now, today. We don’t have to wait until the last day before walking in the light of the LORD. God wants us to walk in his light today. Christ, the Light of the world, has come and has brought peace to us through his death. We can live in that peace, reconciled with God and with one another. We don’t have to live in the darkness. We can live in the light. We don’t have to wait until the Last Day to do away with anger and rage, which is never righteous in the hands of sinful men. Almost always, our rage is only a tool of the devil. Therefore Romans 12 says, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them . . . Live in harmony with one another. . . Repay no one evil for evil . . . If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves. . . To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to

drink . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (vv. 14ff).

Don’t let yourselves be overcome by anger and rage. We all want to think our anger is righteous, but not once does the Bible say anything about man’s righteous anger. Instead it says, “Get rid of all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander along with all malice”(Eph. 4:31). God’s Word makes the case that for us it’s nearly impossible to be angry without sinning. Psalm 37, “Refrain from anger and turn from wrath! It only leads to evil . . . but the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.”

We don’t have to wait for the Last Day. Already today, in our own individual lives, we can start beating our swords into plowshares, and our spears into pruning hooks. Amen.



