

Sermon for the Second Sunday in Advent, Year A
9.xii.2007, 10:00, Holy Eucharist – ELW 5
Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7,18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12
Saint James Evangelical Lutheran Church / Brogue, Pennsylvania

Jesu Juva!

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was
and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

**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.**

--Isaiah 11:9

On the first Sunday of Advent we saw Zion, the Mountain
of the LORD, from a distance in Isaiah's vision of God's
fulfillment. On this Second Sunday of Advent, we are up
on that mountain. What is happening there? What do we
see? What do we not see? How does the world down
below look to us from God's Holy Mountain?

The Prophet shows us a world in which the laws by which we think the world runs are no longer in effect. What do we expect of the world? What do we think is necessary in order to survive? In a recent news segment on radio, I heard a report on a visit to a safari park in the Peoples' Republic of China. The reporter boarded a bus with a group bound for the safari park. When the bus came to an enclosed area with lions, the bus stopped and a man carrying something boarded the bus. The man had a cage full of chickens. He was selling the chickens to the visitors on the bus so that they could toss a chicken to the lions. Several people bought a chicken before they left the bus, and then, to the delight of all their fellow passengers, they each tossed their chicken over the fence to the lions. As the lions ate the chickens, the small crowd laughed and applauded. The reporter, personally disturbed by this,

interviewed some of those who had bought the chickens, and others who just watched, laughed and clapped. The reporter asked one mother if she were not concerned about the effect this might have on her child. “No,” the mother replied, “it is important for the children to see that there are predators and there are prey, because that is the way of the world. The children need to see that, if they do not want to be devoured by others, they must be strong.”

And who would disagree with that?: Certainly not the chickens we have industrially slaughtered for our own consumption, but also people, whose lives may be snuffed out in an instant by a criminal, a terrorist or a lunatic, also homeowners, who may become homeless because of a change in the economy, also workers, whose jobs and futures may be pink-slipped into oblivion. Is this not a

‘dog-eat-dog’ world in which we must make our way by the ‘law of tooth and fang’?

There is another Law, a *Logos*, a fundamental principle, a Word that God spoke before any human word of ruthless terror, and it is through that Word that the universe was and is created. Isaiah the Prophet sees a day when that Word is spoken clearly *in* this world. Isaiah sees how the world will be when God’s Word is born into this world:

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain . . .

They won’t?—No, not where the love of God that came down from heaven in the midst of history is born, Immanuel, God-with-us. For where God’s love lives in our lives, human life is lifted to a plane higher than age-old animosities, even in the streets of York or Harrisburg, even in the hollows and back roads of Chanceford Township or

the shopping centers of suburban Iowa, even in the streets of Baghdad. Where it is not lived, not allowed to be born, then perhaps it is instructive to teach our children to feed helpless animals to predators.

The animal that symbolizes our faith in God's promise is not a lion, not an eagle, not a wolf or grizzly bear. It is instead a Lamb, gentle, helpless without its mother or a shepherd to care for it, the sacrificial animal of choice throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In this world, rejecting the love of God born in the Lamb of God, the old law of tooth and fang seemed to have the last word on one terrible day, and on the day after that. But, beyond that tomorrow, and beyond all of our tomorrows, the Lamb of God reigns over the nations, over heaven and earth and over hell itself, that pit of despair dedicated to the law of tooth and fang. And we believe—*believe* because it

is a matter of sheer faith with precious little to vindicate it—that, even in this life and in this world, the love of God and the peace of Christ carry an authority and a weight which the strong of tooth and fang can but envy, that the Word of God when it is truly born in the heart of faith and lived, can bear up under the most difficult of tests, as it did not so long ago at a little Amish school.

And so now we, who view the world from the height of God's Holy Mountain, do *not* teach our children to through defenseless creatures to the strong and ferocious, or to identify the defeat of the weak by the strong. Instead, we point them to the Lamb of God and to Him Who is also the Shepherd of us, His flock. At we teach them to sing in the old Moravian hymn:

**I am Jesus' little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
For my Shepherd gently guides me,**

**Knows my needs and well provides me;
Loves me every day the same,
Even calls me by my name.**

✠ Amen.

Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from
ours sins by His blood and has made of us a Kingdom,
priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and
dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and
for ever. ✠ Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!