

**Conversations on
 Isa. 2:1–5**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Search the UN Photo Digital Asset Management System at bit.ly/UNphotos for images of the sculptures “Swords into Plowshares” and “Non-violence” outside the United Nations building in New York City. Both signify peace. If you were going to create a sculpture about peace, what symbol would you use?

WHAT is important to know?

This oracle is often called the “floating oracle of peace” because it also appears in Micah 4:1–3. It is apparently part of a general prophetic tradition that was available to both of these prophets as a promise of the eschatological fulfillment of God’s kingdom. Presumably this is especially important in times of difficulty when present circumstances seem unpromising; confidence that the future belongs to God gives hope in the present. In Advent we anticipate the birth of Jesus into a world in need of light (v. 5). Every generation needs assurance that the powers of the world—whether the Romans of Jesus’ time or the principalities and powers of our present age—do not determine the future. (Bruce C. Birch)

- ✧ Why would Isaiah’s audience believe that this prophetic promise would come to pass?
- ✧ In what ways would this prophetic word bring hope to the people?
- ✧ What directions would Isaiah’s words give for how his hearers should live in the present?

WHERE is God in these words?

We are promised by God that as God’s gift of peace becomes real among us, Jews and Gentiles alike will stream to the mountain of God to be instructed and directed by God. The people who are taught by God will seek peace and practice violence no more. Weapons of violence will be destroyed. To receive divine instruction is to share in a vision of a coming realm of peace in which God will judge among the nations, and nations will not learn war anymore. The way forward is to walk in the light of the Lord. (Noel Leo Erskine)

- ✧ Why is it important to realize that it is God who brings the coming peace?
- ✧ What does this promise of the future say about God’s attitude toward violence in the present?
- ✧ What does this promise show about God’s desire for peace?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

In the end, what Isaiah offers is not only a vision of global transformation, but an invitation to live toward that day. “O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!” However hard it may be to believe that a new and longed-for reality will take hold some day, there is power in walking in God’s light now, one step at a time. We may feel cynical or hopeless about the prospects of Isaiah’s vision, but in his invitation lies enormous and practical power. The future belongs to God, but the first step toward that future belongs to those who have glimpsed God’s light and are willing to trust that enough light lies ahead. (Stacey Simpson Duke)

- ✧ In what ways can this vision of coming peace shape attitudes and actions today?
- ✧ What encouragement does this passage bring for you to seek peace in meaningful ways?
- ✧ What new attitudes toward violence, peace, and hope does this passage bring to you?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

We are in the presence of a mystery. God’s own justice and peace will occur among the nations “in days to come.” What days? How? Perhaps all we can say is that the vision describes what God is, in fact, at work in the world to do. It is what Jesus apparently meant by “the reign of God,” which is already present and at work among us, though not yet in fullness. We saw it in Jesus, who converted fear to love, lunacy to sanity, enemies to friends. He died surrounded by swords; a spear stabbed him; nails tore him. They entered infinite love, which “melted them into light.” (Paul Simpson Duke)

- ✧ What new ways of living are implied by realizing God is working toward ultimate peace?
- ✧ Where you can share in the reign of God that is working for peace?
- ✧ How can the life of Jesus transform you or your congregation toward living into the promise of the coming peace?

God of peace, as we enter this season of Advent, we pray that our longing for peace will lead us to work for peace. Amen.