

Isa. 2:1–5

Ps. 122

Rom. 13:11–14

Matt. 24:36–44

God's Peaceful World

Goal for the Session

Children will hear Isaiah's message of peace and identify ways to live in God's peace.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Isaiah 2:1–5

WHAT is important to know?

— From "Exegetical Perspective," Bruce C. Birch

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.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From "Theological Perspective," Noel Leo Erskine

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.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From "Pastoral Perspective," Stacey Simpson Duke

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.

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

— From "Homiletical Perspective," Paul Simpson Duke

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."

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 2:1–5

Focus on Your Teaching

The church year season of Advent is not as familiar to children as Christmas, so it is important to include an observance of Advent in your Sunday school sessions. The focus passage is a wonderful beginning for Advent, and introduces learners to the prophet Isaiah, a messenger from God. Young children will accept that God wants a world of peace, but may have experienced a less than peaceful playground or sports team or even home. Imagine with them what you all can do to help create God's peaceful world. They may be excited to learn that a peaceful world can start with them.

Loving God, guide me to seek your way of peace as I prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ blue or purple cloth
- ❑ paper hands (from previous sessions) or artificial evergreen wreath
- ❑ 4 battery-powered votive candles
- ❑ Bible
- ❑ Color Pack 1, 2, 40
- ❑ magnifying glasses
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

For Responding

- ❑ option 1: plain foam or paper cups, flexible drinking straws, blue or purple construction paper, tape, scissors, pencil, markers
- ❑ option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, supplies listed there
- ❑ option 3: plastic drinking straws; tape; blue or purple gift wrap ribbon; scissors; Color Pack 40; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, arrange the blue or purple cloth in the center of your learning space, using the color your church uses in worship during Advent. (See sidebar on p. 3.) Make a circle of green paper hands on the cloth if you have them from the previous fall quarter or use an artificial evergreen wreath. Put the four votive candles inside the circle. If you are using option 1 in Responding, cut 1" x 12" strips of blue or purple construction paper, one per child. If you are using option 3, cut three 20" pieces of blue or purple gift wrap ribbon per child. (Use the color your church uses in worship during Advent.)

Greet each child by name. Say that today we begin a new part of the church year called Advent. This is the season when we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Explain the color of the cloth (see sidebar on p. 3). Explain that there is one candle for each Sunday of Advent. Each week you will light one more candle. When all four candles are lighted, Christmas Day will be near.

Show Color Pack 40 and read aloud stanza 1, asking the children to repeat each line after you. Sing the first stanza of "Four Candles" (*Singing the Feast*) as you light one candle. Pray aloud, asking learners to repeat each phrase:

Thank you, God / for being with us today. / Help us to learn more about / your word in the Bible. / Amen.

Invite learners to recall a time when someone made a promise to them. Ask:

- ✿ How did you feel when you heard this promise?
- ✿ Did you think this promise would happen or come true? Why or why not?

Say that when we light our Advent candles, we are remembering God's promise to send Jesus. Today's Bible reading is about another promise God made.

Some churches use the color blue in worship during Advent as a symbol of hope. Some churches use purple, a color of royalty, to honor the coming of our king, Jesus. With your group, use the same color your church uses in worship.

Four Candles

Light one candle, Messiah is coming; wait and watch, for his Advent is near.

He will meet us on God's holy mountain; how shall we prepare for his coming?

One. One candle to light the darkness. One. One candle to light his way.

EXPLORING

Place Color Pack 1 on the table or floor and invite the children to gather around and look at it quietly. After a few moments, distribute magnifying glasses and invite the children to point out small details they see. Point to the central figure and ask:

- ✎ What do you think this person is doing?
- ✎ Do you think this person is feeling anxious or peaceful? What makes you think so?
- ✎ What question would you like to ask this person?

Open the Bible to the book of Isaiah. Say that Isaiah was a prophet, chosen by God to deliver God's messages to the people. Look again at Color Pack 1 and say this is what one artist thought Isaiah might have looked like. Say that today's reading is one of the messages that God told Isaiah to deliver.

Teach the words of the following chant and invite the children to repeat it each time you raise your hand:

*Isaiah, Isaiah, what do you say?
God wants peace every day!*

Use Resource Sheet 1 (Story Script) to tell the story. Afterward, ask:

- ✎ What is your favorite thing in the world of peace Isaiah told about?
- ✎ Do you think Isaiah thought that it would be easy for God's promise of a world of peace to come true? Why or why not?
- ✎ How might you describe God's promise of a world of peace to someone?
- ✎ As God's child, what are some things you can do to live in God's peace? How might doing these things help to make a more peaceful world?

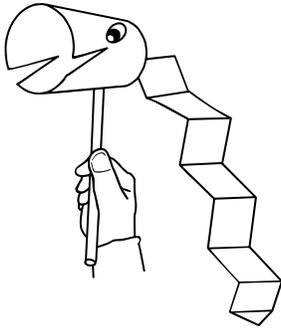
Show Color Pack 2. Invite the children to pretend they are holding the world like this. Ask:

- ✎ What message about God's peace do you want to tell to the children in the world? To the adults?

Comment that we can live in God's peace by the things we do and say, even when those things don't seem very important.

- ✎ What kinds of things can you say and do to live in God's peace each day? What difference do you think these words and deeds might make?

EASY
PREP



Adjust the ingredients as necessary to accommodate any learners with food allergies.

Keep the Advent streamers for learners to use each Sunday in Advent as they sing "Four Candles."

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Good News Puppet** Children will make a puppet to help tell the good news of God's promise of a peaceful world. Lead learners in the following steps: Cut a wide slit into each side of the paper cup to make a mouth. Use markers to add eyes. Color designs on a 1" x 12" strip of construction paper. Fold the strip accordion-style and tape it to the closed end of the cup to make a tail. Push a pencil tip through the bottom of the cup to make a hole and push one end of the flexible straw through the hole. Bend the straw and tape the part above the bend to the inside of the cup. Invite the children to take turns holding up their puppets and calling out the good news of God's promise of peace.
- 2. Food for the Journey** Children will mix together ingredients to make a healthy snack for the journey through Advent. Invite learners to tell about trips they have taken. Ask if anyone had special snacks while they were traveling. Recall that we are just beginning the journey through Advent to Christmas, and they can make a snack for along the way for themselves and for someone else. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Advent Trail Mix) and have learners color the two labels and cut them out. As a group, follow the instructions on the resource sheet for making the trail mix. Invite learners to identify the person to whom they will give this snack. What will they say when they give it to him or her? Reflect on how sharing food is one of the ways we can help make a peaceful world.
- 3. Advent Streamers** Children will make streamers and create motions to accompany the Advent song "Four Candles." Give each child a drinking straw and three 20" pieces of gift wrap ribbon. Demonstrate how to lay the ribbon pieces next to each other and then tape one end of the ribbons to one end of the straw. Invite learners to spread out and practice moving their streamers in different ways. Sing the first stanza of "Four Candles" (Color Pack 40, [Singing the Feast](#)). Work together to create motions to accompany the words, including at least one motion that reminds learners of peace. Sing the song with the motions.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the Advent wreath. Recall that the one lighted candle is for the First Sunday in Advent. Invite them to repeat each line of the following chant:

We count to one. / We wait to see / what God is sending / for you and for me.

Pray aloud:

Thank you, God, for your promise of peace. Help us to live in your peaceful ways each day. Amen.

Say goodbye to each child by name, offering this blessing, "(Name), God bless you as help to make peace in the world."

Story Script

Based on Isaiah 2:1–5

God wants peace every day!

Long ago there was a man named Isaiah. God called Isaiah to be a prophet. A prophet is someone who brings messages from God. One day, Isaiah got a very important message from God about a promise for a peaceful world. He knew he had to tell the people as soon as possible.

**Isaiah, Isaiah, what do you say?
 God wants peace every day!**

Isaiah called out, “Come close, everyone! Gather near! I have a message from God. Listen carefully.”

**Isaiah, Isaiah, what do you say?
 God wants peace every day!**

Isaiah looked at all the people who gathered to listen to him. He said, “Trust God! Count on God to take care of you!”

Isaiah began to tell about a time in the future when everyone would cooperate and live in peace. “God wants you to live in peace. God promises a peaceful world for all of you.”

**Isaiah, Isaiah, what do you say?
 God wants peace every day!**

The people were so confused! They asked Isaiah, “Peace? Tell us, what is this peaceful world that God promises?”

“In this world, the mountain where God’s temple is will be the highest mountain of all. Everyone will go there to learn about living in God’s ways. Everyone will learn how to live in peaceful ways. There will be no war there. There will be no anger. There will be no lawbreakers. Other nations will shout, ‘Let’s hurry to that mountain! Let’s live as God’s people!’ ”

**Isaiah, Isaiah, what do you say?
 God wants peace every day!**

The people were excited and happy to hear God’s promise. They wanted this promise to come true right away. Isaiah wanted everyone to know the wonderful kind of world God wanted. He said, “In God’s world of peace, everyone helps and everyone shares. Can you do this?”

“Yes!” the people shouted.

“In God’s world of peace, everyone is loving and generous. Can you be like this?”

“Yes!” the people shouted.

“When you are doing these things, you are filling the world with God’s peace,” said Isaiah.

Isaiah was satisfied. He had delivered God’s message. He knew the people would begin to live in the ways of God’s peaceful world.

**Isaiah, Isaiah, what do you say?
 God wants peace every day!**

Advent Trail Mix

You Will Need

- copies of this sheet for each learner
- crayons
- scissors
- tape
- 2 zip-seal plastic sandwich bags per child
- 1-cup measuring cups
- large bowl, large spoon
- clean tray
- suggested ingredients (be mindful of allergies): any ready-to-eat cereals; raisins; hulled sunflower seeds; chopped nuts; candy-coated chocolate candies; candy baking chips; mini marshmallows

Directions for 10 bags of snack mix:

1. Place 6 cups of ready-to-eat cereal and 1 cup each of four other ingredients into a large bowl. Stir gently.
2. Have learners work in pairs to place 1 cup of snack mix into each zip-seal sandwich bag—one holding bag open and one scooping. Seal securely.
3. Have learners color and cut out labels, and tape one label to each bag.

A Snack for Your Advent Journey

God bless you with health
and peace as you prepare
to celebrate Jesus' birthday.



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