

### Home Group Reading for December 3-December 9, 2023

In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's house

will be the highest of all—

the most important place on earth.

It will be raised above the other hills,

and people from all over the world will stream there to worship.

<sup>3</sup> People from many nations will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the house of Jacob's God.

There he will teach us his ways,

and we will walk in his paths.

He will judge between the nations

and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares

and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,

nor will they train for war anymore.

(Isaiah 2:2-4)

but with righteousness he will judge the needy,

with justice he will give decisions for the meek of the earth....

The wolf shall live with the lamb,

The leopard shall lie down with the kid,

The calf and the lion and the fatling together,

And a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:4,6)

### Excerpts

"As a rule, things don't stream towards a mountain; they stream away. This oracle speaks of a radical reversal of nature – not only nature 'out there,' but our inner logic as well. Consider humanity's reasonable fears and need for security and order. Then, consider the counter-intuitive gospel (good news) account of the long-awaited Messiah who entered history as a vulnerable child under morally dubious circumstances. Shortly after his birth, he had to flee for his life as a political refugee; and after 33 years, he was able to muster only a handful of followers, who quickly abandoned him when things got rough. Eventually he suffered a terrible and humiliating death at the order of a brutal tyrant." Steve Bell "God is reversing entropy. God is closing the distance. God is bringing divided people back into right relationship. God is bridging the gap. God is saving the world. God is reconciling creation, putting all things back together." Steve Bell

"The presence of Immanuel is the great hope that Advent brings to humanity. In the child of Bethlehem, God entered human history and was present with humanity: "and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:1, 14). In the child born in Bethlehem, God made himself known to his people. This time, however, his presence was physical, which allowed people to know that, through the child of Bethlehem, God was reconciling the world unto himself." Claude F. Mariottini

"One of the invitations of Advent is to attend to the heart of things... to come to know that what we need the most – indeed, what we profoundly desire – though veiled, is already given

as a deposit against what is to come. The joy of the Christian is to give witness, in faith and deed, to what was, what is, and what is to come.” Steve Bell

### **Reflection Questions**

1. What are some of the hopes you hold that seem not likely but you refuse to give up on?
2. Where do you feel hopeless? Is there anything our church community can do to help?
3. How have you seen the “radical reorientation of reality” played out in your world?
4. During this Christmas season, what are some ways you can plan to bring hope to those around you? Better yet, what are some ways you can plan to actualize hope to those around you?