

1. What are your greatest personal hopes for the Christmas season? What are the practical and temporal challenges to those?
2. Read Isaiah 1.1-15. What do you think of this as the introduction to Isaiah's total book (66 chapters)? What does this say about God's and Isaiah's chief concern and focus in this book?
 - a. Historical setting.
 - i. After generations of unfaithfulness to God by both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel (Israel split under the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, 1 Kings 12), matters have gotten so bad that God is moving to implement the "curses" of the covenant he made with Israel, e.g. Deut 28. Although neither Kingdom of Israel had been taken in exile when Isaiah started, the Northern Kingdom will in 722 bc, and ultimately, the Southern Kingdom in 586 bc. So Isaiah is seeking to call Israel back to faithfulness.
 - b. The exposure of sin and the call to repentance is an essential part of ongoing faithfulness with God. It is critical at this point with Israel. But it is also an important part of our preparing for Advent because our unfaithfulness, in whatever form they take, will always undermine some aspect of the good things God wants to do with and for us.
 - c. What do you think of the breakdown of 1.1-15 that was talked about in the sermon? What part of this passage is most applicable to you?
3. But there are two other themes that reoccur in Isaiah.
 - a. One is in 1.18-20. How do you find this way of talking about God's offer of salvation and redemption particularly helpful? How is it similar or different from what we see in the NT?
 - b. How can you use this to respond to 1.1-15?
4. The other main theme in Isaiah is the future completion of God's work in the world, 2.1-5. What is helpful, encouraging for you with this? What are the elements of this future promise? How can this comfort and strengthen you today? How can you make Advent not only about celebrating Jesus birth, but also God's ultimate triumph?
5. Pray for each other for God to be working these three themes in each others' lives that we might know him more personally and follow him more faithfully this season.