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St. Luke's Episcopal Church - Anchorage, Kentucky
The Second Sunday after the Epiphany: Year A ~ Jan. 21 & 22, 2017
Matthew 4:12-23

I could use a prophet in my life. I mean I would really like to be able to reach out to my local prophet to seek out counsel regarding what God is wanting me to do, or what God has in store for His people. Couldn't we all benefit by having a prophet in our lives? After all, Prophets are recognized as being God's called and inspired messengers, so having a prophet play a role in our lives would perhaps encourage us to stay on the right track, and perhaps be similar to having a direct line to God. The Bible illustrates that during the Old Testament period, God's revelation to humanity came through a group of people known as the prophets. 2 Peter 3:2 describes the prophets of the Old Testament as being "holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

So, if I had my choice of an Old Testament prophet that I would like to hang out with, I would have to say that it would be Isaiah (who was also one of the four Major Prophets in the Old Testament). Isaiah was said to have been a hopeful, faithful and loving prophet of God, and he is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Prophet.

He hailed from an influential and distinguished Jewish family and was a well-educated student of international-affairs. He spent most of his time in the city of Jerusalem where he rubbed shoulders with royalty because of his knowledge of world affairs. However, being directed by God, he was often ridiculed for his opposition to becoming ensnared in alliance with foreign powers resulting in conflict. Isaiah consistently addressed the hedonism of Judah and the nation's lukewarm attitude toward the true God. This is perhaps why God allowed Assyria to invade and threaten Judah—to get her attention so she would turn back to her only protector and savior, the Almighty God.

The oracle in today's reading from Isaiah reflects the oppressive military occupation under which Israel struggles to live. But what does Isaiah do? He does not lose hope, but instead speaks his word of light and hopefulness in this time of utter desolation. Though the people feel that God has turned away from them, Isaiah remains steadfast as he waits and hopes. He continues to encourage the people of Israel, as he proclaims that God's face will once again shine on the people of Israel. Isaiah exclaimed "Do not be afraid, do not give up, God's light will break through our doom."

Isaiah's courage to preach hope in the midst of desolation is to offer the people compassion and confidence that God is still present, and that He has not abandoned them. Basically, Isaiah keeps ever-present the vision of a day when the life of the world will be shaped by justice and righteousness and blessed by a peace (Jesus) that will never end.

So, as I stated earlier, wouldn't it be wonderful to have a Prophet in our lives, and especially during times of great struggle, to remind us of God's light and love, and to remind us to remain strong and steadfast while knowing that God will never abandon or forsake us? Isaiah has a poetic way of helping us to see beyond the things that are and imagining things as they could be. He encourages us not to lower our sights, and not to be comfortable with the status quo. He encourages us by giving us a vision of hope, expectation and peace. For those of us who may question "Where is God?" Do we find ourselves waiting for God's light to break into the darkness or anguish that we may be experiencing? During challenging times like this may we be reminded of God's message "I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:6).

Have faith –rest in God and find peace in the love of Christ. During this season of Epiphany – the season of light, as the days begin to grow longer and the darkness begins to

diminish, I ask that you recall the Magi who set off on a journey into the unknown while looking for the light. Their path for the journey was illuminated by the light of a single star, and this light encouraged them to move forward with great hope and expectation. The Prophet Isaiah reminds us that God intends for the people whom His light shines to be themselves a gift – “a light to the nations.” He reminds us that we are to share that light, and most importantly to share the light that we can only yet imagine. *Amen.*