

Isaiah 2:1-5

1st Sunday in Advent

November 27, 1983

A vision: It shall come to pass on the last day that the sirens shall wail and the TV screens shall be filled with the faces of terrified announcers.. Panicky voices shall blare from the radios announcing routes to be taken and procedures to be followed. Some shall rush to shelters with safe food and water while others simply rush, and still others are frozen into inactivity. High in the sky will be the sight of the meteors of the last night streaking to fulfill the destiny for which they were created. And every voice will be heard to say, this can't be. I can't believe it is really happening, This can't be. But in mountains, beneath the earth, the warriors of this battle will sit, alone secure. On screens like those at the local arcade this war will be fought, and they will watch as the monitors follow the path of the attacking forces through the skies. Then the earth shall begin to shake and quake, and light shall flash, a mocking of the first light of creation. And clouds of death shall form until the aroma of the flowers of spring shall become the stink of rotting vegetation and the smell of good food cooking will be replaced with the stench of rotting flesh. And it shall be that in this war, like no war before it only the soldiers shall survive. For a time.

I didn't see the show last Sunday night, I had to be with the Luther League at church. At coffee and on the street I heard reports, most everyone seemed not very affected by it. It seems to have been just another show, and so it was. I suspect the anti nuclear people are somewhat disappointed by the affect of their movie, the Day After.

I try to think of what I will do if the siren goes off.. I can think of nothing. I truly can think of nothing. All my life there has been the threat of nuclear war. As a child I went to sleep afraid about it. But if it comes I don't know what I would do.

Pray. We all would pray. Like we never prayed before we would pray.

Would God stop the missiles in mid air? Before the flash, and the burning and the sickness and death? Would the prayers of millions bring Christ from the sky before steel buildings were melted and every acre on this earth sterilized by radiation?

I read a book by Elie Wiesel. He is a Jew who alone survives of his family. He was at Auschwitz, and other places. They prayed, from the day the rounding up started through trainrides and bitter cold nights and watching mothers and sisters be separated for the last time in this life from sons and husbands and brothers, through it all and every day they prayed until millions of prayers filled the graves. Every one thought, it may happen to others but it can never happen to me. Every single one until it did. So a few soldiers with guns ushered millions to the camps and out of this life and they all just let it happen.

And in Russia. I've read no books of it but the number is I think 35 million. Murdered under Stalin. Lutherans and baptists Russian Orthodox, millions who believed it could never happen to them. But it did and ~~the~~ their children and to their children's children. People who were no different from you and I except that they were born there and we here died under Stalin. And they couldn't believe it could ever happen to them, until it did.

We don't like to think about it. Peoplesaw that show the other night and though they know up here that it could be them, here in the heart they are sure that it could never be. As Jews under Hitler were sure, as Germans under Stalin were sure.

If there is anyone left, will someone, someday look back at us and ask, How could they let it happen, didn't they see what was coming, why didn't they fight with all their being to keep nuclear war from happening?

And the answer will be, because we didn't think it could happen to me. Others may suffer and die, but I will be the survivor.

O, I don't know what to do. I don't have a political solution that will guarantee that nuclear war will never happen. I am not in a position to stand in the pulpit, speaking God's word and second guess either our president or his opponents. I do know this: it is not the vision with which I began that God intends for his creation. God no more wants nuclear war than he did the deaths of millions under Stalin and Hitler. Rather we have God's vision for the future before us from the passage from Isaiah: " " .

This is the vision of the latter days. This is what God will do when human history has ended, when God's kingdom shall come. All nations shall come to worship God. All nations. God will be the judge of every one and through God's judgement there will be peace. Swords and spears will have no more use, they will be used for farming, there will be peace.

Neither shall they learn war any more.

We need to learn from this vision. It is not the vision of the destruction of the enemies of Israel, It is not the triumph of God's people over all other peoples. It is the inclusion of all peoples in God's kingdom of peace.

All nations.

God is not a God for the Americans and against the Russians, for the Jews and against the Arabs, not for the Namibians and against the South Africans. God will Judge, between the nations, but God will judge, not we. Where wars are waged, they can never be waged in his name, for only peace is in his name. The vision is not of the defeat of the enemies, but of peace for all nations.

These are hard times to know what is right, every time from Isaiah's time to our time have been hard times to know what is right. Always some on both sides claim they know the will and judgement of God. They do not. God will judge.

Seek his ways, strive to walk in his paths. Pray this day for insight and understanding for ourselves and for every one. Pray that we as individuals as a congregation, ^{and as a nation} may seek and do his will above all else.