

Better Than We Could Ever Hope For

Luke Bushman, November 27th 2022; Isaiah 2:1-5

Have you ever heard or used the phrase “Better than I could have ever hoped for”? If you have ever used this phrase, it means that something very wonderful has happened to you. I have two examples in my life that come to mind, one small, and one big.

When I was a kid, we would always get the Sears Christmas catalog. Me and my three siblings would sit around that catalog looking at all the cool toys- the RC Cars, the pajamas, the Batman playsets, and talk about everything we wanted for Christmas. We would get really hopeful that we would get something out of the Sears Catalog for Christmas. We always got something better than we could have hoped for, for two main reasons. 1) My Mom is an excellent gift giver and 2) My Mom is one of those people who buys Christmas presents in July, so she already had our gifts by the time the Sears Catalog came out.

The other example that immediately comes to mind is my wife Becca. When I was growing up, and didn't know better, I envisioned what my future wife would be like. I figured she would really like soccer, and love Batman movies just like me. I figured she would be from Saskatchewan, and would essentially be a person almost identical to myself. Then I met Becca, an exotic Vancouver Island girl, who does not care much for sports and cares even less for Batman movies, and I got to marry someone better than I could ever hope for. Becca and I share very few interests, but share similar values, goals, and we share a lot of love for one another.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, and which focuses on prophecy and hope. I was reading our passage in Isaiah, and found that this prophecy is better than what I have been hoping for. You see often the hope that I have meditated on in previous years is a hope confined to my own life. I hope for mental well being, comfort in sadness, and that I can be transformed into a better person.

These are good hopes, but if that is all I hope for, I am limiting my view of what God can do in the world. I think this limited view stems from my own individualistic theology that I chose to believe. In the past my understanding of the Good News was that if I believed in Jesus, I would in the future have eternal life. That was the extent of what I was hoping for.

The scriptures description of hope is far bigger than the individual well being of one person. It is a global hope. In the text from Isaiah today, the coming goodness of God is not just for Isaiah, and it is not just for Judah and Jerusalem. It is for everyone. This coming goodness is not simply a thing of the future, it has implications in the here and now.

The house of the Lord is going to sit on the highest mountain, for everyone to see, a literal beacon of hope that all the nations will stream to.

People will make the journey from near and far to come and receive instruction, and learn how to walk in God's paths.

Why do people want to come from far away, just to be instructed on how to live? I don't want to walk a long way just to be told what to do.

People come from far away for instruction because the result is a beautiful and harmonious future. A future where they will make their swords and their spears into farming equipment, because they will have no need for them. A future where they will no longer learn about war.

This passage today challenged me to set my hopes on something bigger than myself. The passage is not about an individual being comforted. It is not about a singular human's mental well being. It is not about forgiving just one person's sins. The vision talked about here is about God bringing about an entirely different world. A world where everyone is welcome to approach the kingdom on the mountain. Where nations come pouring in to hear how to live. A world without weapons, where war becomes a thing of ancient history.

This prophecy is not to be taken as something that will happen at the end of time. It is something that we should anticipate in our space and time.

Our hope isn't just individual, it is also global. Our hope isn't just for the future, it is also for the present.

This advent as we await the arrival of our savior, let us hope in a better world outside of ourselves. And let us allow that hope to inspire us to work towards the kingdom described to us this morning.

My favorite section from the scripture this morning was: **They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation will not raise the sword against another, and never again will they train for war.**

Let us hope and work for the day we study war no more.