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December 7, 2025

Advent 2

From the Lectionary Story Bible

Isaiah 11:1-10

Old Isaiah had a long grey beard. Sometimes, when he got angry or excited, he could lift his head high and walk fast. In the market, when many people were listening, Old Isaiah could talk very loudly. But then he would be very tired. He walked slowly and needed a heavy stick to keep him from falling. Some of the children in Jerusalem would yell bad things at him as he walked by. Old Isaiah pretended he couldn't hear them. But most of the children knew that he was a kind old man who liked to talk with them. Even though he could never remember their names. Sometimes Old Isaiah didn't want anyone around. Sometimes he would just sit under his big tree, with his eyes closed. Some people said he was sleeping, but the children knew that he was dreaming. Or thinking. Or praying. "Sometimes the dream I have is God's dream," he told Rebekah one day. Rebekah had just lost one of her front baby teeth. Isaiah looked at the place where the tooth had been. He looked very carefully. Isaiah knew such things were important. "How do you know when it is God's dream?" Rebekah asked. She sat down on the grass beside Isaiah. She leaned against him a little. Old Isaiah always smelled a bit like the medicine he took for his sore bones. "When I have a dream like the one I just had, it fills me up inside so my whole body tingles. It feels as if God loves every bit of me, from my toes right up to my grey hair. I feel so warm and so strong inside, I just know that the dream I am having is God's dream." "Were there children in your dream? Or animals? "No. Maybe there should be. The dream God gave me is about a leader. This person would really want to lead in God's way. Such a leader would really care about poor people. Things should be changed so no one has to be poor anymore." "Do you think this leader would care about children? And about animals? Some leaders don't care about them very much." "That's true, Rebekah. It's very sad, but true. And I think maybe God's dream isn't finished yet. Could you help me dream some more of it?" "Sure!" said Rebekah. She closed her eyes and leaned against Old Isaiah and tried to feel a little bit lazy – as if she were going to sleep. Old Isaiah closed his eyes, too. They sat together and dreamed for a long time. Then Rebekah spoke very quietly. "I had a little bit of a dream about a wolf with big sharp teeth. And a tiny newborn lamb. They were playing together. They were friends." After a while, Old Isaiah spoke. "I dreamed of a cow and a bear together. And the bear was eating grass just like the cow, so the cow wasn't afraid. And then I saw a lion eating straw." "I was dreaming about a tiny baby," said Rebekah. "Like the baby my mom is going to have. The baby was just learning to crawl. It was playing right near some snakes. The baby picked them up, but the snakes didn't bite." "Yes! That's it! A child!" Isaiah's eyes flew open. "A child just your age, Rebekah." "Was I in your dream?" she asked. "Well, not you, Rebekah. But it was a child like you. In my part of God's dream, I saw a child your age helping people understand how to live in peace. I want to write that in my book, Rebekah. "I will write God's dream about peace – about how people who always fight with each other can be kind to each other. They can learn to love each other. To play together. To work together. "And just the way you helped me now, I will write about how a small child will teach people how to be kind to each other." Rebekah stood up and gave Old Isaiah a kiss. He took her hand and held it next to his wrinkled cheek. "You're a wonderful person, Rebekah," he said. Then Old Isaiah smiled his big, toothy smile. And Rebekah laughed. "Old Isaiah! You have holes in your mouth where teeth should be. Just like me!" Here's what Old Isaiah wrote in his book:

A child shall be born for my people, a child full of wisdom and hope. This child will grow up full of wisdom, bringing justice and peace to the world. And the wolf and the lamb will play, the cow and the bear will eat grass, the lion will eat straw like the ox, and a baby will play with snakes. People will no

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longer hurt each other, and the earth will be covered with love.

Matthew 3:1-12

Some people thought John was weird. He wore clothes made from the hair of camels. He ate insects and wild honey. Not only that, John often sounded angry. Sometimes he even yelled at people. But John had an important job to do. God wanted John to get people ready for the Messiah, the one who would tell people about God's love. "Get ready," John shouted. "If you have done wrong things, tell God you are sorry! Live in God's way!" "What do you mean?" people asked John. "If you have two coats, share with someone who doesn't have any. Be honest. Be kind to others. Don't be greedy." Many people came to John. [Missing] "So John baptized them in the river. John held them under the water for just a moment. Then he lifted them up again. "I feel washed clean," they said. "I feel clean inside." We are sorry for the bad things we've done," they said. "We want to live God's way." "I baptize you with water," John told the people. "But someone is coming who will baptize with something much better. You will be baptized by God's spirit. "It won't be with water. You will feel God's spirit. It will feel like a nice warm fire inside you. "When this special someone comes, you will know that you are one of God's children."



I'm Yochanan ben Zechariah. Some people call me John. Some people call me The Baptist. All I do is tell people about how near God is and I'm in jail. You know why I'm in jail? I told that snake Herod who says he is the king of Galilee when he's really just the Roman puppet. I told him that marrying your brother's wife is not a nice thing to do. He said, "Well, I'm king. I can do whatever I want." And maybe that's But I still said it wasn't it wasn't right. You don't go and marry your brother's wife. And so I'm in jail. I tell you that that woman, Herodias, she's really trying to get ahead. I don't know if I'll get to see that.

Some of my friends came to visit the other day and they wanted to know whether Jesus of Nazareth, who's kind of picked up where I left off talking about the nearness of God's kingdom, whether Jesus of Nazareth is the one that I was talking about. Because when I was down by the river, I used to tell people, "I'm going to baptize you with water, but there's someone else coming who's going to baptize you with the spirit, and give you a fire inside so that you'll be alive for God." And I said, "Well, go find out." So they went and they asked Jesus and Jesus' followers, "Are you the one or should we wait for someone else?" What Jesus told them was just look around. What do you see? You see people being healed of diseases. You see people being able to see more clearly, to hear more clearly, not just physically, but also just with their hearts and their minds, their understanding... better. And apparently Jesus said some nice things about me. I don't think it'll help in my trial.

I used to stand waist deep in that water and I would see people coming to me and some of them I could tell had real changed hearts and some of them I could tell were just there because that's where the crowds were going and I would let them know that I saw that they were faking it. I even called them snakes. My favorite thing to say was, "You brood of vipers, you sack of snakes, who warned you that you should be here?" And

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then I would talk about the need to turn to God, to be near to God. And so many of them would come and they would go into the water and come out a changed person.

And then I would tell them, it's not all about this day. It's about the days to come. There's more to come. There's even people coming after me who will do greater things than I do.

There's more to come. Candle's not lit. There's more to come.

****offering****

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