



still waters

home church studies

isaiah 65.17-25 [Worship]

17 For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. 20 No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. 21

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD – and their descendants as well. 24 Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent – its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.



Consider:

The news is that big change is coming. Mary sings (in Luke) her revolutionary song about the reversal of social arrangements and Isaiah offers a poem about homecoming for the alienated. Advent is about pondering the big changes that are set in motion by Christmas.

In the narrative about Jesus in Matthew 11, John the Baptizer wonders whether Jesus is the long expected Messiah. Jesus urges John to consider the "facts on the ground," which are the consequences of Jesus' effective ministry. The list of beneficiaries of that ministry is not unlike that in Psalm 146. The list includes the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead, and the poor (Matthew 11:5), that is, all the devalued and marginalized.. In the psalm "the Lord" does the work. In the narrative, Jesus does the work. Ergo ... yes, Jesus is the Messiah. Yes, Jesus is the one expected and welcomed. It is no wonder that Mary sang her revolutionary song: the birth and ministry of Jesus constitute a social revolution that keeps reverberating through every time and place.

Advent is about readiness to acknowledge, receive, and participate in the revolution that clusters around Jesus. The word from the Epistle of James is to have patience. That is not passivity, but it is resolve to stay with it, to watch for the possibility, and not to settle for fatigue, resignation, or cynicism. The "patience" in James means to continue in "joy and gladness," with no "sorrow or sighing" (Isaiah 35:10). – **Walter Bruggemann**

[Scripture]

Matthew 3.1-12

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" 4 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." 7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' 11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."