



Advent Reflection for Saturday, December 23, 2023

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Isaiah 65:17-25

For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
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.
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.
No more shall there be in it
an infant who 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.
They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
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.
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.
Before they call I will answer,

while they are yet speaking I will hear.
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.

Today's Reflection is by Asa Campbell-Kurtz

Most of my faith is questions. It's skepticism and doubt and frustration. It's been that way pretty much since I started paying attention in church. Hope, joy, and spiritual revelations are all things that I've heard about endlessly, it feels like, but hardly ever experienced in a church setting. My hope and joy comes from people and the things we can do for each other, and I often have trouble connecting those experiences to God, even though I've heard many times that other people are the places where God is easiest to find. I have so many questions. All the time. It's exhausting to wonder so much. I wish for some kind of lighting bolt, vision of an angel revelation that will wipe all doubt away, but I don't know how to interpret scripture. I'm afraid of missing the point, or getting it wrong, and then being written off as too young or too cynical to understand anything meaningful. In fact, I often write myself off for those things. I give up on God constantly. And yet, I like going to church. I look forward to it, at least recently. I like the rituals, the candles, receiving communion. I like carrying the cross, or the gospel book, and wearing the robes, and feeling like part of something. It's the repetition of it. The reliability. It's doing essentially the same things, going through the same movements every Sunday morning that ground me and make me not so unbearably frustrated at God.

"They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord."

The older I get, the more I understand the need for stability and the value of time and waiting. It's strange and solemn and chaotic to be 16 years old, no matter who you are outside of that. I've started to feel time passing. It's going by faster now. And Advent, I guess, is about waiting, and biding your time, and being ok with the passing of it. That's what this passage says to me, at least.

"I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and delight in my people;"

I like the idea of God rejoicing and delighting in us. I'd never heard of that before reading this passage a couple days ago. It makes God a little bit warmer to me. He and I can both see people who are lovely and kind and be delighted by them, in a real, life-changing way. I don't actually believe that God is a person, but I wonder, reading Isaiah, if He ever has revelations. If He feels

joy, or hope, or despair, especially when looking at us, at the terrible and beautiful things we can and have done. I hope that this passage isn't just a promise for the future, for some brand new paradise, but also for the present, and for the world we live in now. I spend most of my time trying to look for good, trying to find things worth rejoicing over. And I'm lucky. I find things almost every day. I hope God can find things worth rejoicing over too.



Asa Kurtz has attended Holy Apostles for about 2 years, and acolytes pretty often. He's a junior in high school, and likes building things, reading, and his dog, Daisy.