

The Isaiah Poems

Isaiah 11:1-10 | Advent 2016

Session 2: All You Have to Do is Look

PREPARING THE SPACE

You may wish to create an "alter-table" with a purple or blue cloth, a candle, and a picture of children playing or a pair of glasses or other symbol of seeing.

WELCOME & LIGHTING A CANDLE

As you light the candle say:

The first lesson of prophecy is this: There isn't anything to look for. All you have to do is look. By Wilkie Au, *The Enduring Heart*

Let us enjoy the light! Take a few moments of silence.

CIRCLE TIME

This is a time for all participants to "check in." There is no cross talk or discussion. Start with yourself and then go around the circle.

Share your name (if needed) and something interesting you noticed in the last few days.

You might also want to invite the group to share any experiences with the Breath Prayer practice from last week.

THE POEM OF THE PROPHET

Read Isaiah 11:1-10, and leave a moment of silence.

As you read it a second time, invite the group to listen for a word, phrase or image that comforts or challenges their heart today.

You might want to go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or image. Just the word or image quietly dropped into the centre of the circle.

ENTRY POINTS

See the Participant Sheet #2 for the Entry Points. Invite the group to read the Entry Points silently or by taking turns reading aloud.

PLANNING YOUR SESSION

Gather items to help create your space.

You will need a Bible.

Make copies of Participant Sheet #2. It has the Entry Points to be read during the session.

You might want to show the Edward Hicks Image of the Peaceable Kingdom found in the Supplemental Resources on the Advent webpage.

If your group enjoys singing then choose a chant/song for beginning or at the end.

NOTE: You might want to invite participants to bring a picture of where they see joy to the next session. It might be a photograph, or framed art from their home, or a Christmas card they received, or a picture from a magazine or newspaper.

The session is designed for one hour but you can adapt for a shorter or longer time.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PROMPTS FOR JOURNALLING

These questions have no right or wrong answers. It is important to stress this with the group. The questions help start a conversation. Use as many as you like or ask participants what questions they have and discuss possible responses.

1. Have you experienced times when you kept trying and trying until you finally saw something new? What helps you keep going when you feel discouraged?
2. The Isaiah poem seems to be highlighting signs of entering a promised new realm. What do you think: Is Isaiah talking about a future still to come? Or can you point to signs where that peaceable realm is breaking through now, though perhaps not fully here?
3. Isaiah has opposites moving into peaceful ways of being together (wolves and lambs, leopards and goats). Are there examples in your faith community where differing opinions have come to live together? What are some practices your community uses to reconcile differences?
4. What gifts does your community of faith already possess to help bring justice and peace to our world?
5. A stump with a shoot of new life might just be more than a stump. What spiritual practices help you see the extraordinary in the ordinary, the Holy in the present? How might you train yourself to look for tiny seeds of hope and new life among us and in the world.

A PRAYER PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Review this Prayer Practice with the group. You might want to invite the group to take a brief walk (weather permitting), or spend 5-10 minutes looking out a window. Introduce with words like this:

There isn't anything to look for. All you have to do is look.

Here is your prayer practice for this week. Stop. Look. Pay attention. God wants to show you something. That's all. Just stop. Look and pay attention. Go on a contemplative walk. Or pull your chair up to a window. All you have to do is look. God will use something ordinary (like a stump!) to give you a word you need to hear. And when you see with the eyes of your heart, you'll have contemplative vision and that changes everything.

BLESSING

Invite participants to stand in a circle. Use words like this to describe how the prayer time will work.

We will pray together with words or in silence. The prayer will go around the circle one by one. I will begin the prayer and, when it comes round the circle, I will end our prayer.

Whether you pray with words or in silence, end your prayer by saying AMEN out loud. This signals the person standing next to you to begin praying with words or in silence.

Today we pray for people, places or situations we hold in our heart.

Extinguish Candle

Leave with Light lingering about you and know that God is always coming into the world.

Remind participants to bring a picture of where they see joy. (See **Planning Your Session** for details.)