

SCHOOL OF THE WORD
PROPHETS
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Prophets 7

Programme

1. What's a "prophet"?	Oct 11
2. Amos: Justice (i)	Oct 18
3. Amos: Justice (ii)	Oct 25
4. Who is/are Isaiah?	Nov 8
5. Isaiah and justice	Nov 15
6. Isaiah and liberation	Nov 22
7. Isaiah and hope	Nov 29
8. Isaiah: New Testament	Dec 6

Sequence

- Advent, here we come!
- History again!
- What was going on?
- Poems
- An ending of sorts
- Conversation

A Good Advent — bishop Sarah Mullally

"The language of hope, promise and waiting is not an easy one for today's culture. We don't always use the language of hope and have become more accustomed to the language of doubt and cynicism rather than expectation and promise. In world where we have become accustomed to immediate and swift action, we don't like to wait, often seeking to eliminate all waiting. If we are going to have a good Advent we need to understand waiting."

"A good Advent" from *A Good Year*, Mark Oakley (ed.), pp. 1-18.

Isaiah in the Sunday Readings of Advent

Advent	A (Matthew)	B (Mark)	C (Luke)
1	Isaiah 2:1-5	Isaiah 63:16b-17, 64:1, 3-8	Jer 33:14-16
2	Isaiah 11:1-10	Isa 40:1-5, 9-11	Bar 5:1-9
3	Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10	Isa 61:1-2a, 10-11	Zeph 3:14-18a
4	Isaiah 7:10-14	2 Sam 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16	Mic 5:2-5a

Contents of Isaiah 56-66

- 56:1–8: Yahweh Will Gather Yet More Worshipers
- 56:9–57:13: Punishment for the Idolatrous Oppressors of the Faithful
- 57:14–21: God Will Lead the Humble Faithful
- 58: The Fast That Yahweh Wants
- 59: Those Who Repent in Zion Will be Saved
- 60: Zion's Glory
- 61: The Prophet Is Sent to the Poor
- 62: Prayer for the City's Restoration
- 63:1–6: Day of Punishment for the Nations
- 63:7–64:2: Communal Lament
- 65: The Righteous Are Upheld in Judgment: They Shall Inherit the Land
- 66:1–16: Judgment in Jerusalem in Favour of the Righteous
- 66:17–24: Jerusalem as the Goal of the Nations' Pilgrimage

The layout of Third Isaiah

Introduction 56:1-8	Foreigners in the service of the Lord	Conclusion 66:18-24
56:9-59:8	Community life in Jerusalem	65:1-66:17
59:9-15a	Prayers for forgiveness and restoration	63:7-64:12 [11]
59:15b-21	Visions of the Lord in judgment	63:1-6
60:1-22	Visions of Jerusalem restored	61:10-62:12
	The prophet's call 61:1-9	

Opening Invitation

- Isaiah 56:1-8
- This sets the tone and contains a few surprises.
- See next slide

Isa 56:1 This is what the LORD says,
 “Promote justice! Do what is right!
 For I am ready to deliver you;
 I am ready to vindicate you openly.

2 The people who do this will be blessed,
 the people who commit themselves to obedience,
 who observe the Sabbath and do not defile it,
 who refrain from doing anything that is wrong.

3 No foreigner who becomes a follower of the LORD should say,
 ‘The LORD will certainly exclude me from his people.’
 The eunuch should not say,
 ‘Look, I am like a dried-up tree.’”

4 For this is what the LORD says:
 “For the eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths
 and choose what pleases me
 and are faithful to my covenant,

5 I will set up within my temple and my walls a monument
 that will be better than sons and daughters.
 I will set up a permanent monument for them that will remain.

6 As for foreigners who become followers of the LORD and serve him,
 who love the name of the LORD and want to be his servants—
 all who observe the Sabbath and do not defile it,
 and who are faithful to my covenant—

7 I will bring them to my holy mountain;
 I will make them happy in the temple where people pray to me.
 Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar,
 for my temple will be known as a temple where all nations may pray.”

8 The sovereign LORD says this,
 the one who gathers the dispersed of Israel:
 “I will still gather them up.”

A Community Lament (First Sunday of Advent)

I

Isa 63:7 I will tell of the faithful acts of the LORD,
 of the LORD's praiseworthy deeds.
 I will tell about all the LORD did for us,
 the many good things he did for the family of Israel,
 because of his compassion and great faithfulness.

8 He said, “Certainly they will be my people,
 children who are not disloyal.”
 He became their deliverer.

9 Through all that they suffered, he suffered too.

The messenger sent from his very presence delivered them.
 In his love and mercy he protected them;
 he lifted them up and carried them throughout ancient times.

II

- 10** But they rebelled and offended his holy Spirit,
 so he turned into an enemy
 and fought against them.
- 11** His people remembered the ancient times.
 Where is the one who brought them up out of the sea,
 along with the shepherd of his flock?
 Where is the one who placed his holy Spirit among them,
- 12** the one who made his majestic power available to Moses,
 who divided the water before them,
 gaining for himself a lasting reputation,
- 13** who led them through the deep water?
 Like a horse running on flat land they did not stumble.
- 14** Like an animal that goes down into a valley to graze,
 so the Spirit of the LORD granted them rest.
 In this way you guided your people,
 gaining for yourself an honoured reputation.

III

- 15** Look down from heaven and take notice,
 from your holy, majestic palace!
 Where are your zeal and power?
 Do not hold back your tender compassion!
- 16** For you are our father,
 though Abraham does not know us
 and Israel does not recognize us.
 You, LORD, are our father;
 you have been called our protector from ancient times.
- 17** Why, LORD, do you make us stray from your ways,
 and make our minds stubborn so that we do not obey you?
 Return for the sake of your servants,
 the tribes of your inheritance!
- 18** For a short time your special nation possessed a land,
 but then our adversaries knocked down your holy sanctuary.
- 19** We existed from ancient times,
 but you did not rule over them,
 they were not your subjects.

IV

- Isa 64:1 (63:19b)** If only you would tear apart the sky and come down!
 The mountains would tremble before you!
- 2 (64:1)** As when fire ignites dry wood,
 or fire makes water boil,
 let your adversaries know who you are,
 and may the nations shake at your presence!
- 3** When you performed awesome deeds that took us by surprise,
 you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.
- 4** Since ancient times no one has heard or perceived,
 no eye has seen any God besides you,
 who intervenes for those who wait for him.
- 5** You assist those who delight in doing what is right,
 who observe your commandments.
 Look, you were angry because we violated them continually.
 How then can we be saved?
- 6** We are all like one who is unclean,
 all our so-called righteous acts are like a menstrual rag in your sight.
 We all wither like a leaf;
 our sins carry us away like the wind.

V

- 7 No one invokes your name,
or makes an effort to take hold of you.
For you have rejected us
and handed us over to our own sins.
- 8 Yet, LORD, you are our father.
We are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the product of your labor.
- 9 LORD, do not be too angry!
Do not hold our sins against us continually!
Take a good look at your people, at all of us!
- 10 Your chosen cities have become a desert;
Zion has become a desert,
Jerusalem is a desolate ruin.
- 11 Our holy temple, our pride and joy,
the place where our ancestors praised you,
has been burned with fire;
all our prized possessions have been destroyed.

Signs of hope: the new Jerusalem - 62:1-5

- Isa 62:1** “For the sake of Zion I will not be silent;
for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet,
until her vindication shines brightly
and her deliverance burns like a torch.”
- 2 Nations will see your vindication,
and all kings your splendour.
You will be called by a new name
that the LORD himself will give you.
- 3 You will be a majestic crown in the hand of the LORD,
a royal turban in the hand of your God.
- 4 You will no longer be called, “Abandoned,”
and your land will no longer be called “Desolate.”
Indeed, you will be called “My Delight is in Her,”
and your land “Married.”
For the LORD will take delight in you,
and your land will be married to him.
- 5 As a young man marries a young woman,
so your sons will marry you.
As a bridegroom rejoices over a bride,
so your God will rejoice over you.

Signs of hope: covenant blessing / thanksgiving 60:1-22**I**

- Isa 60:1** “Arise! Shine! For your light arrives!
The splendour of the LORD shines on you!
- 2 For, look, darkness covers the earth
and deep darkness covers the nations,
but the LORD shines on you;
his splendour appears over you.
- 3 Nations come to your light,
kings to your bright light.

II

- 4 Look all around you!
They all gather and come to you—
your sons come from far away
and your daughters are escorted by guardians.
- 5 Then you will look and smile,
you will be excited and your heart will swell with pride.
For the riches of distant lands will belong to you

- and the wealth of nations will come to you.
- 6** Camel caravans will cover your roads,
young camels from Midian and Ephah.
All the merchants of Sheba will come,
bringing gold and incense
and singing praises to the LORD.
- 7** All the sheep of Kedar will be gathered to you;
the rams of Nebaioth will be available to you as sacrifices.
They will go up on my altar acceptably,
and I will bestow honour on my majestic temple.

III

- 8** Who are these who float along like a cloud,
who fly like doves to their shelters?
- 9** Indeed, the coastlands look eagerly for me,
the large ships are in the lead,
bringing your sons from far away,
along with their silver and gold,
to honour the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, for he has bestowed honour on you.

IV

- 10** Foreigners will rebuild your walls;
their kings will serve you.
Even though I struck you down in my anger,
I will restore my favour and have compassion on you.
- 11** Your gates will remain open at all times;
they will not be shut during the day or at night,
so that the wealth of nations may be delivered,
with their kings leading the way.
- 12** Indeed, nations or kingdoms that do not serve you will perish;
such nations will be totally destroyed.
- 13** The splendour of Lebanon will come to you,
its evergreens, firs, and cypresses together,
to beautify my palace;
I will bestow honour on my throne room.
- 14** The children of your oppressors will come bowing to you;
all who treated you with disrespect will bow down at your feet.
They will call you, 'The City of the LORD,
Zion of the Holy One of Israel.'
- 15** You were once abandoned
and despised, with no one passing through,
but I will make you a permanent source of pride
and joy to coming generations.
- 16** You will drink the milk of nations;
you will nurse at the breasts of kings.
Then you will recognize that I, the LORD, am your deliverer,
your protector, the powerful ruler of Jacob.

V

- 17** Instead of bronze, I will bring you gold,
instead of iron, I will bring you silver,
instead of wood, I will bring you bronze,
instead of stones, I will bring you iron.
I will make prosperity your overseer,
and vindication your sovereign ruler.
- 18** Sounds of violence will no longer be heard in your land,
or the sounds of destruction and devastation within your borders.
You will name your walls, 'Deliverance,'
and your gates, 'Praise.'
- 19** The sun will no longer supply light for you by day,
nor will the moon's brightness shine on you;
the LORD will be your permanent source of light—

- the splendour of your God will shine upon you.
- 20** Your sun will no longer set;
your moon will not disappear;
the LORD will be your permanent source of light;
your time of sorrow will be over.

VI

- 21** All of your people will be godly;
they will possess the land permanently.
I will plant them like a shoot;
they will be the product of my labour,
through whom I reveal my splendour.
- 22** The least of you will multiply into a thousand;
the smallest of you will become a large nation.
When the right time comes, I the LORD will quickly do this!"

An ending of sorts

Isa 66:17 "As for those who consecrate and ritually purify themselves so they can follow their leader and worship in the sacred orchards, those who eat the flesh of pigs and other disgusting creatures, like mice—they will all be destroyed together," says the LORD. **18** "I hate their deeds and thoughts! So I am coming to gather all the nations and ethnic groups; they will come and witness my splendour. **19** I will perform a mighty act among them and then send some of those who remain to the nations—to Tarshish, Pul, Lud (known for its archers), Tubal, Javan, and to the distant coastlands that have not heard about me or seen my splendour. They will tell the nations of my splendour. **20** They will bring back all your countrymen from all the nations as an offering to the LORD. They will bring them on horses, in chariots, in wagons, on mules, and on camels to my holy hill Jerusalem," says the LORD, "just as the Israelites bring offerings to the LORD's temple in ritually pure containers. **21** And I will choose some of them as priests and Levites," says the LORD. **22** "For just as the new heavens and the new earth I am about to make will remain standing before me," says the LORD, "so your descendants and your name will remain. **23** From one month to the next and from one Sabbath to the next, all people will come to worship me," says the LORD. **24** "They will go out and observe the corpses of those who rebelled against me, for the maggots that eat them will not die, and the fire that consumes them will not die out. All people will find the sight abhorrent."

Final editing

- The book of Isaiah was edited as a response to the entire course of events of 750–500 BC.
- It was intended to be a template for interpreting future actions of God.
- The final editors are often subtle, inserting brief introductions, juxtaposing passages to bring out similarities or differences, suggesting analogies, and creating "inclusions" or bookends, to mention but a few of their techniques.
- The editors linked chaps. 1–2 and 65–66 by key words and images:
- Rebels in 1:28 and 66:24
- The inextinguishable fire in 1:31b and 66:24
- The garden cults in 1:29 and 66:17
- The threat to attack sinners in Zion ("I will turn my hand against you," 1:25) and the attack on Zion in 66:6, 15–16;
- The promises that "Zion shall be redeemed in the judgment [NRSV "by justice"]" (1:27) and "The voice of the Lord, dealing retribution to his enemies" (66:6).
- The assertion that Yahweh will attack Zion to purify it (1:21–26) is followed by the scene of Zion as the goal of the nations' pilgrimage in 2:2–4:6, and the same sequence appears in chaps. 65–66.

Conversation