

What Will We Become?

Isaiah 11

April 15, 2018

Rev. Kelley Becker (Report on IAS Trip with Olivia Holder)

*Isaiah 11 Slide

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

³His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

⁹They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;

for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

This text is a description of the perfect leader and the kingdom that perfect leader will bring about. On our first seminar day in Washington DC, we talked about the second half of the passage in terms of reconciliation. Metaphorically, true reconciliation for all of creation, will bring about a world like this passage describes. Reconciliation will bring about a world where the ones who seem unlikely to dwell peacefully together, will be content, safe, and cared for in each another's company. This fragmented world will be made whole.

As I reflected on what I experienced on the IAS trip, I was drawn to the first part of this passage, the description of the leader that will rise up to show the world the way. I witnessed, in the young people who participated in the IAS trip, glimpses of this kind of leader. I saw in them a desire to learn about how the world works, how others see the world, what their role is today and what it could be in the future, and I heard them talk about how their faith and understanding of who God is and what God's justice is like informs their thoughts and their ways of being in the world.

I want to share a little bit about that with you and I hope it fills you with hope for the future because that's what my time with these young people has done for me. On our way to church on Sunday, we walked to the White House. When we arrived, we took a quick group picture and the youth were given a few minutes to take their own pictures and look around. I took a few pictures of my own and then looked around to see what my travel group was up to.

*I found them, and most of the other young people, not gazing at the White House, but talking with this man.

They were asking him questions about why he was there. The man explained that he lives there and will continue to live there, in a tent, because he believes his message is important. The students read his signs, took pictures with him, and were genuinely interested in his opinions and experiences. They were respectful and, as we left, thanked him for talking to them and for sharing his message of peace and justice. The youth chose to spend their time hearing another human being's point of view and vision for the world. They tried to understand what he hoped to accomplish, some even donated money to help him. I saw this attitude surface over and over again throughout the trip. The young people were open to being changed, open to new ideas, and were seeking ways to fit these new ideas together in order to impact their own futures and, I believe, the world.

I want to share one more specific experience.

*On the first seminar day, the students were divided into groups to make a list of the ways in which the Church engages reconciliation. One group was supposed to list the ways in which traditions of the Church engage reconciliation; another group listed the ways in which experiences the Church provides engage reconciliation; and the last group was asked to make a list of the ways in which scripture engages reconciliation. It was a rather daunting task for them, especially since it was very early in the trip and early in the day.

The thing about this experience that struck me was that each group's list was almost completely about the ways in which our church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), engages reconciliation through inclusion and welcome. I think the leader of this part of the seminar was after something a little bit different (like I said, it was early), but as a minister in this manifestation of the Church, my heart soared. These young people may have trouble pinning down exactly what we are doing to move us forward as a pro-reconciling/anti-racism church, but they can tell our story with regard to welcome and inclusion without

missing a beat. The fact that their identity as members of this church is wrapped up in welcome and inclusion, and a love for diversity, is cause for celebration. We don't get it all right, but we get that right.

*I'm grateful for to have had this experience, especially because Olivia and Eli were part of it. While I have only been part of their journey for a year, I found myself so proud of them in so many ways. I hope to share more of my experiences with you at other times. I want you to know... IAS is worth the money, the time, and the work it takes to get our young people there. I am proud of this regional ministry and excited about the opportunity to work with Josh to be sure we continue to support the youth who choose to participate in the trip. Thank you for your grand support of our young people and of my time away to share this experience with them.

Amen.