

“CALM AND BRIGHT”
“Light in the Midst of Darkness”

Christmas is a twelve day holiday beginning with what we call, “Christmas Day.” Many of us, by the time New Year’s Day is here have packed up, swept up, and buckled down into whatever we have next on the list. I would invite you to hold on for one week. Remain in this place of wonder and light for just a few more days. Open your hearts to the possibility there is a little more to be considered, prayed, and celebrated. This week we will take a hard look at what scripture warns and promises. We must know our actions are connected to our environment, and if we are to be the change we want to see in world we probably need to soak up as much divine light as our little hearts can handle. – Leslie Coates

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Light in the Midst of Darkness”**

I’m really saddened by the attempts to separate and polarize. This is a time when we have hungry people, people out of work, and people out of spirit. This is a time where we need to uplift, not to separate. – Maya Angelou

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, December 31, 2018 Isaiah 11:1-5

Today is New Year's Eve, as well as the 7th day of Christmas. Our text from Isaiah is familiar and well-loved, mostly for the image of rebirth after destruction. The image of a green root rising from a chopped down tree would frame well in any Disney movie (in fact, it has been used multiple times). What follows is a little less Disney appropriate. This new green shoot must have the proper environment to flourish. Later in verses 2-5 we get a glimpse of the required conditions. Understanding, strength, and knowledge all come together to provide appropriate judgement and justice. If we are to contribute to an environment of regrowth, what might we do to help provide the right environment? What do you seek most in your own life? Do you desire understanding, strength, and knowledge?

Tuesday, January 1, 2019 Isaiah 11:6-9

Today is New Year's Day, and also the 8th day of Christmas. Many of us will make some sort of promise to the new year, whether it a bold resolution or timid half desire in our heart. Verses 6-9 of today's scripture paint a bold picture of what a redeemed world might look like with very little hedging. Read this scripture replacing "wolf" and "lamb" with who you know to be "powerful" and "weak." If these animals represent people, who would you think God intends to lie down together?

Wednesday, January 2, 2019 Hosea 4:1-4

Today is the 9th day of Christmas, and also the first day for New Year's resolutions to be broken. It is hard to keep up our own good intentions. Today's text in Hosea draws a direct connection between behavior and the condition of our Earth. Not only will destructive behavior hurt ourselves and those around us, but it is directly connected to the care of our planet. If self-improvement isn't enough to encourage righteousness, could responsibility for the planet spur us toward progress? These type of texts are often hard to read in scripture, but if we can see the cause and effect of behavior on the people Israel in Hosea perhaps we can see the connection in our own society today.

Thursday, January 3, 2019 Revelation 21:1-6

Today is the 10th day of Christmas. If yesterday's text was a little gloomy, Revelation gives some hope and promise for the redeemed world! Not only will lion and lamb lie together, but God dwells with humankind! Revelation is a book often misunderstood and manipulated, but if taken as promise of what the redeemed world is to be for us it is a comfort to be considered. Though Revelation often sounds like a picture of what is to come, in what ways can allowing the Kingdom of God to flourish here and now affect how we see today's world?

Friday, January 4, 2019 John 1:1-15

Today is the 11th day of Christmas, and a good time to be reminded of what the celebration is intended to be for us. The light came into the darkness, and we celebrate it every year. The light, in fact, exposes much wickedness and destruction, but also makes reconciliation possible. We cannot fix what we do not see as broken. We cannot reconcile what we do not see as out of balance. We cannot repent what we do not see as sin. If we truly wish to reflect the light of the Christ, we must speak truth to power concerning God's poor, powerless, and marginalized people. We who are in power must set down our weapons and welcome the orphan, immigrant, and widow. We must rid ourselves of wickedness and reflect the true light of Jesus born!