

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. <sup>2</sup>The 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. <sup>3</sup>His 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; <sup>4</sup>but 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. <sup>5</sup>Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. <sup>6</sup>The 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. <sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. <sup>9</sup>They 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.*

*<sup>10</sup>On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.*

I live in a violent part of town where little ones are being stalked. I see them always nervous, never relaxing their vigilance. At any moment life can end. A shadow, a movement, a sound sends them fleeing. In the sky above a hawk patrols - chipmunks - sparrows - goldfinch are not safe when the hawk is in the neighborhood. A family of feral cats lives under a deck nearby, I see the orange cat moving among the spruce trees, on the lookout for a tasty morsel – mouse, baby rabbit, chipmunk, bird – ready to pounce if he can get close enough. I open the door - he dashes away – sure that the human is the one to be feared. Darkness falls – still others with claws and teeth seek their food for another day.

A long, long time ago Isaiah wrote these words: “The 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. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand in the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.”

Fantasy? A dream of a utopian future? If I cannot tame even my backyard, what hope is there for all the world? For longer than we can remember violence has been the way of this world. Why even in the Bible the story of the first two children is the telling of Cain killing Abel. From the moment the serpent enticed them to declare their independence from their creator violence has filled their earth.

Still Isaiah weaves this picture of a peaceful kingdom when the curse of Eden is overcome – a child putting his hand down into the den of the deadly adder. Could it ever be?

A shoot from the stump of Jesse – a descendant of Israel's great king, David – a very special human would be born. The very spirit of God would 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.

Through his judgement and his decisions the poor and the meek would have justice, with words he would bring down the wicked. He would be good and faithful and the whole creation would be full of peace.

What a dream.

A long time ago God tried on that dream. God dressed himself in human flesh in a child named Jesus. On the day of his baptism the Spirit from God rested on him. With the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips, with words he lifted up the little ones, the preyed upon. Sickness, disability, sin, none of these could withstand what he spoke. Why he even put his hand into the adder's den, he went to Jerusalem to face a religious establishment that preyed on all the little ones and to face that great eagle Rome that grasped in its talons whoever it willed. He went to Jerusalem and the ancient serpent struck. Crucified him. Now he was like all the other little ones, another victim devoured by violence. So much for Isaiah's dream.....

But on the third day another word was spoken, "He is risen." The one crushed by the eagle's talons – torn by the eagle's beak was living and breathing and whole once more. The creator of the lion and the vulture and the hawk and the rattlesnake began a new creation right in the middle of the old one – a new creation now in you. The spirit

that rested upon Jesus has been poured into you on the day of your baptism – the spirit of wisdom and understanding the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Jesus is gathering the chipmunks, the sparrows, the finches. Sometimes even a hawk or a lion comes along. Jesus has gathered all of us to live the kingdom of peace in the world of violence. Our weapon, our defense is the very one who is God's word – the crucified and the risen one. Here and there a lion does lie down with a lamb, the new creation conquering the old. Often little ones are still crushed the way the Son of God was. But those on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests know that in the end the young child will put his hand into the adder's den and no harm will come. In the end all creatures will live together in peace.

Once in a while I see this sight: a hawk fleeing a sparrow. A great big hawk being chased by a tiny little bird. the little bird always stays behind the hawk, away from talons claws – harassing that hawk until he leaves the neighborhood.

Is that little bird you – risking harm to protect the defenseless little ones? Amen.