
Meditation on Isaiah 11:1-10
*'An Advent Song of Ascents: **Stand as a Signal**'*

Basic thoughts:

Jesus is the light of the world. His incarnation began in a manger. Through his coming into this world, he establishes a direct connection to us human beings. His light wants to reach everyone. The differently designed fingerprints represent the uniqueness of human beings.

*Grace to you and **peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [Phil 1,2] ::: Amen.*

::: ONE :::

Dear sisters and brothers,

Trough the light which comes to us in Jesus, the Christ, a new time rises.

I am not sure if we are always really clear about this. I am not sure if we are particularly clear about what this really means.

I think it always depends on what kind of situation we are in at the moment.

If everything is good—at least fairly good—then you don't really wish for a new time, for a new light that shows you a new way, someone before you who stands as a signal for a new era, for change.

But when life is in a jam, when life is a mess, goes wrong, maybe completely wrong, we long for our inner or outer darkness to be illuminated by a light that gives orientation. A light that is really held up like a signal of hope and change.

It is then a matter of finding a new way into the future and the strength of moving towards it.

::: TWO :::

However, exact predictions about the future are difficult, actually fairly impossible.

Yet the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament or First Testament dares to make one.

He is as certain about the future as anyone can be.

Not because he can clearly foresee the future, *but because he trusts God.*

600 years before Jesus coming, Isaiah dares to speak words about the future which are among the most beautiful words the First Testament offers.

You have already heard the verses.

They are verses of *hope*.

Verses that shine like a new light into a dark place and let a new time dawn.

Verses which are a signal of hope—visible from afar.

::: THREE :::

At the time of the prophet Isaiah, these words could not really be interpreted.

They were heard, recognized, the words were enjoyed, but nothing was known for sure.

Who could the prophet actually have meant?

For it was not until much later that the words from John's Gospel came, which say of Jesus that he is the light of hope.

::: FOUR :::

Are we still experiencing this today—this wonderful new time prophesized?

And—will we be worthy of this new time?

After all, some recognised the words as so significant that they were written down so that others could read them too.

And then there they were, these words.

They were written on a sheet of papyrus and over time slightly dusted.

::: FIVE :::

The words of Isaiah were first followed by great distress.

The people became a people truly living in darkness.

Several of the people of Israel lost their homes and were carried off to Babylon. This distress was greater than the hope for new times.

Those who have to fight hardship hope for the next day rather than for the next years or decades.

Perhaps every now and then people blew the dust off the old words and sighed to read what a new time might look like.

But when they sighed, they were, if not forgotten, then filed away in the bookshelf.

‘What are we to do with new times when the old ones have not yet been mastered?’

::: SIX :::

And then Jesus comes. Comes as a waymaker, a signal carrier of hope and salvation.

In the Gospel of Luke we are told in great detail what Jesus' arrival in this world was all about.

Jesus, born in a very small, *insignificant* manger in a very *insignificant* stable in a very *insignificant* place.

For many years he himself is quite *insignificant*.

Then he grows, becomes a known person to his people. And he seeks out for friends.

He tells stories about God, touches people, speaks courage to the sore souls. ‘Do not be afraid’, he says, God is always with you.

He says it in such a way that people can believe it—that even we, the people of today, can believe it.

::: SEVEN :::

And so, a very insignificant little light becomes a great bright glow. And Jesus steps up and stands as signal.

Faces begin to shine that have long been bitter. Bodies stretch that have long been bent. Tongues are loosened that were silenced.

And people recognise, even today: the new time does not simply fall upon us.

In Jesus, the light of the new age has come to us.

He shines - and he shines on us so that we may shine and carry his light further—so that now we stand as signals for hope, salvation, love, and peace.

We are the new age.

Our sensitivity to people, our attentiveness to need and pain, our helping hands - all this is the new time. The new time of God is near, is growing, becomes stronger and stronger.

So, in this time of Advent let us be strengthened in our hope through God's love and the hope which lies in his coming—so that we are strengthened and encouraged, and become signals of hope and peace for our world.

::: Amen.