

## **Sermon, Advent 1, November 30, 2025 St. Timothy's, Herndon**

### **The Reverend Pete Nunnally**

The world seems to be falling apart, with nations at war with one another, deals being made, and foreign powers exerting their strength and threatening their neighbors. The wealth of the nation is concentrated in a select few, the poor are exploited, and corruption is rampant in the court system. Sound familiar? I'm talking about Jerusalem and Judah in the latter half of the 8th century BC.

Externally the mighty Assyrian empire was growing and posed a mortal threat to Judah, and internally economic disparity and exploitation was at an all time high. This is the world Isaiah was living in when he spoke his vision we heard today:

In days to come  
the mountain of the Lord's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it

This isn't a vision out of nowhere, it's a vision of hope borne out of the destruction facing Jerusalem and the internal collapse of social order. All great visions come out of the deep wilderness. Visions of hope and anticipation of something glorious waiting to be born.

A few summers ago I was invited to stay a few days with friends at Emerald Isle in NC...

Story of poke getting dragged into the water

—no pole holder  
—Lizzard fish, put it on  
—wandered off to fish for Spanish mackerel  
—pole dragged into the water

I had some hope, but it was more of a wish than a hope. Wishes are easy (and usually don't come true). Hope, however, is active. It requires us to suspend the reality we see, and imagine and look for a reality that is not yet visible, not yet imaginable. I had a line in the water, but I wasn't really anticipating catching anything, otherwise I wouldn't have wandered away from the pole that would need my immediate attention if anything was on it.

Life on this earth is beautiful, but it's also hard. Anyone ever felt like nothing's going to change? Anyone feel like things are just getting worse?

Or perhaps you've had periods when the whole world goes gray and you can't see any color in life anymore. I have. One of the ways the devil gets to us is by tricking us into thinking nothing is going to change, and that God doesn't really care, and won't show up for us. Maybe even that God doesn't exist at all. We end up consumed by despair with nothing to anticipate and no room for hope.

Fishing, when done right, is the ultimate act of hope. It requires slowing down, paying attention, and anticipating what you want to catch. I wasn't anticipating anything, and I wasn't ready when a giant fish got on the line.

Jesus warns his disciples that they won't know when the Son of Man will come. "You must be ready," he says. Because you might miss it. You might miss Jesus in the sunset or the face of another, or the Jesus who asks you for money at the intersection, or the Jesus who, from the depths of your heart, says "I have a new vision for you."

This is the first Sunday of the season of Advent, a season of slowing down, paying attention, and anticipating a new reality—a world in which Christ is coming and has come. A world haunted by Christ who is always lurking around the corner, under the surface of what is visible. A world in which, as Isaiah said,

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning-hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the Lord!