**Advent Prayers: Prepare the Way**

*Each day, in the morning when you rise, or at night before you go to sleep, join with me to pause to prepare the way in your heart for the coming of Christ.  Read through Isaiah 2:5-11, and then read the meditation and directive for prayer for the day, asking God to humble your heart and prepare the way for His coming.  By the time Advent is over and Christmas is here, we will have considered each question and prayer four times, letting God’s work and God’s Spirit do His gentle, humbling, corrective work in our hearts.  My prayer is that as every high place in our hearts is humbled, we will see the glory of the Lord revealed together (Isaiah 40:4-5).  For the Child who came and for the King who is coming, join with the church to prepare the way in your heart.*

**Isaiah 2:5-11**

(5) House of Jacob, come, let us walk in Yahweh’s light.

(6) For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob,

Because they are filled with influences from the east,

And go fortune telling like the Philistines.

And with the children of foreigners they shake hands,

(7) And their land has become full of silver and gold,

And there is no end to their treasures,

And their land has become full of horses,

And there is no end to their chariots,

(8) And their land has become full of no-gods,

To the work of their hands they bow in worship,

To what their fingers have made!

(9) And humankind is humiliated,

And each individual is demeaned –

Impossible that You should forgive them!

(10) Go into the rock,

and hide yourself in the dust,

because of apprehension of Yahweh,

and from the splendor of His eminence.

(11) Humankind’s haughty looks will be demeaned

And the cockiness of individuals brought down,

And Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day.

(Translation by Alec Motyer, *Isaiah by the Day)*

**Sunday:**

**Get Real:** Throughout Scripture, we see that God rises as a light over and around His people, giving direction, purpose, and glory (v. 5).  Yet so often, we are “full from the east” (v. 6), full of our own worldly sources of light, and use the justifying voice in our own hearts and culture to direct and dictate our steps rather than allowing Yahweh and His Word to do so.  Pause, and ask the Lord to show you the true nature of your heart.  How are you walking in the influences of your own light rather than the light of the Lord?  Do the steps you take on a day in and day out basis line up with the Light given to you in God’s Word and through God’s Spirit?

**Get Low**: Ask the Lord to convict you on one specific step you have taken or are taking that is not according to His Light, repent, and make every effort to correct your steps according to God’s Word, looking up and out to the One who will always be faithful to show you His way.

**Monday:**

**Get Real:** In Isaiah 2:6, Isaiah accuses God’s people of shaking hands with the children of foreigners, which means instead of trusting God to be their source of power and protection, they are making treaties and agreements with other nations and other peoples to protect them instead of truly relying on Yahweh as being sufficient for all of their needs (Alec Motyer, *Isaiah By the Day).*One of the hardest things to do as the people of God is to keep our hearts centered on trusting God, believing He is who He says He is and He can do what He says He can do.  Before running to any other person, any other plan, any other job, any other insurance, we are to run to *Him.*The greatest offense to an all-powerful God is trusting in another power to give you what He alone can give.   Are you “shaking hands” with the world, trusting in another agreement, power or authority to save or protect you instead of trusting in the sufficiency of God alone?

**Get Low:** Ask the Lord to convict of one specific way you have taken the hand of someone or something other than Him to keep you “safe” or pull you out of trouble.  Get real, get low, and repent, and then “turn your eyes upon Jesus.  Look full in His wonderful face.”  All of the problems that seemed so insurmountable will grow strangely dim as you learn to take *His* Hand and trust Him one step, one day at a time.

**Tuesday:**

**Get Real:** In Isaiah 2:7, Isaiah writes that the land of God’s people has become “full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures.”  Instead of laying up for themselves treasures in heaven, which is securely and eternally safeguarded and protected from rust, decay, or robbers, they have laid up for themselves treasures on earth, “where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 5:19-20).  Jesus tells us, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 5:21).   Because the treasure of God’s people in Isaiah 2:7 is earthbound, tied to things that cannot save them and will rot and be destroyed, their hearts are earthbound.  The rottenness of their treasure has entered in to rot their hearts, as all earthbound treasure will ultimately do.  What about you?  Where is your treasure?  Is it in your pocketbook?  Is it in the clothes you can buy yourself and the restaurants you can pay to go to?  Is it in the vacations you can take or the home you live in or the leisure activities you can participate in?  Is it in your children, their activities, accomplishments or safety?  Where do your thoughts most naturally drift when you have a quiet moment to yourself?  To what place or places does your money flow most freely?  Is it to the church, to the people of God and the things of God, building the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that cannot be destroyed by earth or time?

**Get Low:** Turn your eyes upon Jesus, the only True Treasure that can save you, and ask the Lord to convict you of one specific way your heart is tied to earthbound treasure.  Repent, and then ask the Lord to make Jesus your treasure as you spend time in His presence and in His Word.  Ask Him to show you one specific place where He wants you to redirect your silver and gold, and as you give, the direction of your heart will follow.

**Wednesday:**

**Get Real:** In the second half of Isaiah 2:7, Isaiah writes, “…and their land has become full of horses, and there is no end to their chariots.”  Horses and chariots are symbols for the strength of humankind and the systems of this world.  Never in God’s Word are God’s people directed to place their hope or trust in chariots.  The most vivid image we have of those who do is in Exodus 14:28-29 when Pharaoh’s pursuing army of horses and chariots is thrown into the sea.  Not one of them remains.  But the people of God who trusted in the hand of God to save them walked through the sea onto dry land.  David writes in Psalm 20:7-8, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.  They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stood upright.”  No matter how convincing the arguments of the world sound, no matter how strong the systems of the world appear to be, they will all totter and fall before the coming of the glory of the Lord, and all those who trusted in their power to save will fall with them.  What about you?  What system of the world or individual accomplishment are you trusting in to save you?  Is it your bank account, your beauty, your education, your good works, or your job?  Is it your health or the medical system or your own favored political party?   What horses and chariots look mighty to you to save?

**Get Low:** Christ did not come to save us using the power of Rome or a particular political party or stance.  He did not come to save us with His degrees, good looks, or hard work.  He came as a suffering servant, unattractive and unrecognizable to those around Him (Isaiah 53:2-3), and described Himself as being “gentle and humble of heart” (Matthew 11:29).  Repent for believing that the systems of this world that are prideful and powerful can save us, and turn from relying on your own human strength to save you as well.  Ask the Lord to give you a heart that goes hard after humility, and leans entirely upon the strength of the Lord to save you, your family, your city, your country, and your world.  Ask Him for one specific way to stand upright in the strength of the Lord, trusting in the power of His hand and His name to save.

**Thursday:**

**Get Real:** Isaiah 2:8 tells us that the land of God’s people “has become full of no-gods, to the work of their hands they bow in worship, to what their fingers have made!”  Alec Motyer writes, “Isaiah’s definition of a ‘no-god’ is self-reliance.  The idolater had ‘done it all himself’ with his strong hands and skilled fingers” (*Isaiah by the Day).*We love to worship what we have made because we can then control what we worship.  When we turn, rather, to worship the God who has made us, we find we are held in the loving grip of a God who knows us, loves us, and directs us along His paths, in His light, in His ways.  Our hands will follow our hearts as we begin to serve the Only One who has full and complete control over every minute of every day.  What “no-gods” are you most tempted to turn towards in worship?  What about that god makes you feel secure, safe, or in control?  What area of your life does point to, letting you know that you need to surrender control to the only real God?

**Get Low:** Repent of worship of your “no-god” and of having an idolater’s heart.  Ask the Lord for the one specific step He wants you to take to destroy your idol and actively surrender to Him.  Ask Him to fill the anxious places in your heart that fear full surrender to Yahweh with His light and His love and trust Him for the courage to take the next step of God-reliance instead of self-reliance.

**Friday:**

**Get Real:** Look in Isaiah 2:10 at the consequences of those who have chosen to make the earth their treasure: “earthbound in the wisdoms they cherished (6), the values and securities they sought (7) and the gods they worshipped (8), now in their extremity they have only the earth to turn to” (Motyer, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Isaiah).*On the day that Yahweh returns to earth and His glory is revealed, those who trusted in themselves have to hide themselves in the dust and in the rocks of the ground.  Those who have tried to bear their own burdens and their own sins will be borne away by the wrath of the Lord.  But those who have humbled their hearts and turned to Yahweh to bear their sins will be comforted and behold the glory of the Lord (Isaiah 40:1-5).  In what ways are you earthbound in your pursuits?  How are you trying, day in and day out, to bear your own burdens, make a name for yourself, build up your own treasure, and walk in your own paths?

**Get Low:** We know the path of self-reliance and pride only leads to destruction.  Ask the Lord to show you one specific way you are earthbound in your thinking, acting, or worship, repent of whatever He is that He shows you, and then ask Him to give you a heavenly perspective on how to think, how to act, how to worship, and how to walk.  Ask that the “light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ would shine on the darkness of your heart to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (II Corinthians 4:4, 6).  Ask that this Light would be the Light by which you now walk, live, think, and see.

**Saturday:**

**Get Real:** Our passage in Isaiah ends with verse 11 saying, “Humankind’s haughty looks will be demeaned and the cockiness of individuals brought down, and Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day.”  When Isaiah talks about humankind’s “haughty looks,” he is referring to the eyes of the body.  “The eye represents the direction in which one is looking and therefore stands for the aims and interests of life.  Hence it is the organ of desire (Psalm 123:2), the expression of humility (Psalm 131:1), or, here, of arrogance” (Motyer, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Isaiah).*If the eyes of our hearts are earthbound in their gaze, we will be earthbound in our aims and interests of life, destined to be brought low on the day that Yahweh appears.  But if the eyes of our hearts are fixed on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith, we will be Christ-bound in our aims and the direction we walk in life.  To where do your eyes most often look in life?  Is your gaze held by your circumstances, your health, your finances, or your fears about the future?  Or is your gaze turned upon Christ in Whom is every promise given to us by God “Yes” and “Amen” (II Corinthians 2:20)?

**Get Low:** Pray the apostle Paul’s prayer for yourself and for anyone else God brings to mind: “I pray that they eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe” (Ephesians 1:18-19).  Turn your eyes upon Jesus, and confess your sin of pride, of self-reliance, self-dependence, and self-made worship, and ask that as you walk through life, instead of your circumstances, instead of your finances, instead of any self-made or world-made system, your eyes would be fixed on Him.  And instead of being “filled with influences from the east,” full of worldly light and knowledge that only leads to destruction and death, you would be full of the light of the glory of God given to us in the person of Christ.  As you train your eyes to look and linger longer and longer upon Jesus, your heart will be made more and more ready for His appearing…on Christmas Day and on the Day of the Lord to come.