

[Spirituality](#)

[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

December 2, 2019

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



“A little child shall guide them” (Isaiah 11:6).

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24

The wondrous, prophetic poetry of Isaiah is joined to Jesus’ exuberant cry in the Holy Spirit: “I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for what you have hidden from the wise and learned you have revealed to little ones.”

Isaiah’s vision was of a future time in which peace would descend on the earth and even natural conflicts between predator and prey would be resolved. “The wolf shall be the guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. Danger and threat will be no more, for the baby will lay its hand on the adder’s lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on my holy mountain.”

Isaiah sees this promise of justice and nonviolence as possible because of the appearance of a powerful messianic figure filled with the holiness of God. The early church identified this righteous figure as Jesus, and Luke breaks into his Gospel narrative to have Jesus declare that he has been sent by the Father to fulfill the all promises made through the ages. Jesus tells his disciples: “Blessed are eyes that see what you see.”

What stands out in both readings is the idea that God's entry into the world will be characterized by the innocence and vulnerability of children. Their eyes see what has been hidden from the wise and the learned. Free of ideological filters and the self-protective lenses adults develop, children apprehend reality as it is, revealing the underlying vividness of God's presence. They respond spontaneously with delight instead of the calculated reserve of experienced social players, timing their entrance for advantage.

Jesus found his greatest reception among the poor, God's little ones, the weak and the meek, the broken and the defenseless. His greatest critics were the pretentious gatekeepers and arrogant rule-makers who prided themselves in their superior intelligence and cautious skepticism. They represented law and order to Jesus' grace and freedom, and in the end judged him dangerous enough to be sacrificed to protect the status quo.

Advent and Christmas work best when children lead. If nurtured and guided to express their natural empathy and openness, young children renew the lives of their parents. If protected from want and acquisitiveness, children absorb and return affection, imitate kindness and unselfishness. They speak the truth in their words and their feelings, and if not suppressed, have a precious advance toward a lifetime of healthy relationships.

The scriptures record that when history has been at its lowest ebb, wounded by war and exhausted of all hope, the one gift most needed is this, as Isaiah proclaimed: "For unto us a child is born" (9:6). Advent and Christmas are a divine "do-over" for a world seeking renewal and hope. We are wise to let our children lead the way.

Advertisement