

Read: Isaiah 11:1-10

Let's get ready for peace

Isaiah 11:6-10

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.

They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When you heard Isaiah's words, did you smile a bit? A wolf and a lamb living side by side? A lion eating straw? That's not the way it really works! Put straw in front of a lion and he won't touch it. Put a lamb in a cage with a wolf, and you'll just have a well-fed wolf. Cows and bears, leopards and goats can't get along. They're natural enemies!

Actually, they aren't. When God created the world, it was a perfect place. There was no fighting, no animals eating each other, no death. Sin changed all of that. Now we live in a world where wolves want to eat lambs and a child who puts his hand into a viper's nest is going to be taking a trip to the hospital. We're so used to sin, it's hard for us to picture a world that isn't like that.

That's why God gives us these pictures. To help us understand that Jesus brings peace to the world. He uses these pictures that seem so strange to make this point: Jesus will bring peace, even where it seems impossible.

And he tells us where to find it: on his "holy mountain." That's a picture God uses for his church. When you and I hold to God's Word, he brings us peace. It doesn't always feel like it—sometimes we still hurt each other. We do something completely unnatural: we sin against people God created us to love. That will always be the case this side of heaven. But the more we're filled with the knowledge of the Lord—as we go back to his Word for forgiveness and guidance—he'll help us forgive those hurts, even in people that feel like our enemies. That's the

peace Jesus brings to us. And then one day, he'll bring us to himself in heaven, where there will be no more sin or pain again.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What was your favorite animal picture from today's Bible reading?
- What is so strange about a lion eating straw?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Are these images "literal" (talking about real wolves living with real lambs) or "symbolic" (trying to help us picture peace)?
- What, at the end of our reading, is bringing such great peace to the world?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- How can you help spread God's peace?
- When we look at the world, we don't see peace like Isaiah pictured. Does that mean God failed? Why or why not?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Savior, there are some problems in my life that I can't imagine ever getting better. It seems as impossible as picturing a wolf and a lamb lying down together. As we listen to your Word, teach us about the peace that Jesus brings. Help us confess our sins to each other and forgive each other. Help us share our faith so that other people find your peace too, until you bring us to perfect peace in heaven. Amen.