

Family Faith Discussion Questions
For Sunday November 27, 2022

Whether you worship with us online or in-person, you may find these questions helpful in starting meaningful faith discussions at home.

Scripture: Isaiah 2: 1-5, Matthew 24: 36-44

Helpful Background:

Isaiah 2: 1-5

Isaiah is one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. *(This designation between major and minor prophets has a lot to do with the length on their book, but also takes into account how influential the prophets' story is to the life of faith throughout history. Isaiah is very significant to Christians because a lot of the prophecies and evidence early Christians used to support that Jesus was the Messiah comes from Isaiah. We read it a lot in Advent.)*

Most scholars believe that the book of Isaiah as we have it today was written at different points of history. The book itself says that it is the visions of Isaiah in the days of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. We are also told that Isaiah's time as a prophet began the year King Uzziah died. From other sources we know this to be 742 BCE. The latest recorded activity is dated to 701 BCE. However, only chapters 1-39 can be traced to this period of time. Chapters 40-66 are considered much older in origin and are often referenced by scholars as Second Isaiah (40-55) and Third Isaiah (56-66). This does not mean that there was more than one prophet named Isaiah, but that later authors decided to add their chapters to this book. Second Isaiah can be dated to the 6th Century BCE, during the Babylonian Exile, and Third Isaiah can be dated to an even later period with a Palestinian point of view. We do not know why the work of prophet Isaiah and two other anonymous prophets were combined, but the combination was gradual. We begin to see Isaiah in its final form around the 5th century BCE.

Our passage today comes from First Isaiah, meaning the historical figure who served as prophet to the people and advisor to kings.

Matthew 24: 36-44

In the preceding chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus has been teaching in the Temple and debating with the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees. *These groups are different 'schools of thought' within the Jewish faith during Jesus' time. We read about Jesus clashing with the Pharisees most often because they are the closest to each other. Pharisees believed that the rituals, rites, and tradition of Jewish faith practices needed to be upheld at all costs. In the Gospels we see Jesus encounter the Pharisees several times and often call out their strict adherence to rules, laws, and rituals without thinking about the people affected by those laws. The Herodians were a group within Judaism who accepted King Herod and his rule over the Jewish people. The Sadducees were similar to the Pharisees in belief but put a higher importance on the temple itself. Many Sadducees were upper class people involved in politics and leadership.*

Our Gospel passage this week picks up in the middle of Jesus sharing predictions about the future and has Jesus quoting Scripture from the past to explain to the disciples how it is being fulfilled, or will be shortly. Verses 35-44 include Jesus quoting/referring to passages in Isaiah. The original passages from the book of Isaiah are prophecies regarding the Messiah who is to come. Jesus is expressing to the disciples exactly how he is fulfilling these prophecies.

Questions:

Isaiah 2: 1-5

- What do you think Isaiah means to describe by referring to “mountain of the Lord's house”?
- Verse 4 is a key passage to our understanding of the prophecy of who the Messiah would be. What does this verse mean to you? How does it affect your faith, or your hope, about the Messiah's return knowing he will work to end war, “turning swords into ploughshares”?
- What can we do as Christians today to prepare the world for the time when war will no longer be taught, and weapons will not be used (as described in verse 4)?

Matthew 24: 36-44

- Verse 36 picks up without explaining what day and time it is referring to. For context, Jesus is discussing the time of the return of the Messiah with the disciples.
- What do you make of the verses that refer to Noah?
- What are your beliefs about the second coming? When you imagine it, what do you imagine? Is this something you have given much thought to? Why or why not?
- What meaning or importance do you experience from this passage about Jesus' return? What meaning or importance do you find in this passage about living our lives now, rather than focusing on Jesus' return?