

Swords into Plowshares

Grades
3-4

PEACE • ADVENT 1 • YEAR A

ISAIAH 2:1-5



1

What's happening in this story?

The mountain of the Lord's house is a recurring image in Isaiah. There's a mountain rising above other surrounding hills and mountains. The Lord and the Lord's people are on it. All peoples are being gathered to this mountain. Teachings will flow from the Lord, through the people, to the nations. Israel will be a light to the nations, especially through the teachings of peace, *shalom* (a sense of God's wholeness, well-being, and peace), reconciliation between warring nations, and a shift away from the technologies of warfare and toward working the land. It's a gorgeous, inviting vision.

What does this story mean for kids?

For both younger and older kids, the content of this story can be quite abstract, but the actual concepts are not out of their reach. Understanding that God wants us to come to God's house (a place to be with God and gather with others) and to learn about God's teachings is accessible and important. However, while the concept of peace may be obvious to adults and adolescents, an explanation of swords, plowshares, spears, and pruning hooks will be needed for younger kids.

What is the Lectionary Connection?

Being instructed in the ways of God teaches people to move from harming one another toward peace. Biblically, peace always means more than the absence of conflict; it is the presence of being whole, or at ease with who and what you are.

AGE LEVEL TIP

It's normal for kids to have conflict. Your response to that conflict matters. Approach tension as an opportunity for compromise or cooperation, not as a win-lose situation.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- White paper
- Markers
- Clear tape
- Pens

LESSON SUPPLIES

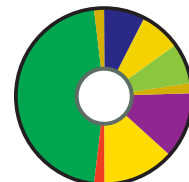
- Paper circle (2-in. diameter)
- Soft modeling clay

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Lay out paper and markers. Invite kids to write or draw what they're looking forward to this Christmas. Help kids to think beyond presents. Christmas also means joyful songs, time with family, and decorations.

Invite kids to look at the Wall Chart.

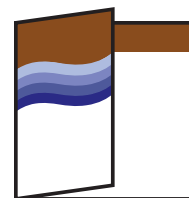
Point out today's date, church season, color, and icon. Hold up a small paper circle. Have a kid tear the circle in half and tape one piece in today's space on the Wall Chart. **We all have times when we feel like something is broken. How can a friendship become broken? Ask another kid to tape the rest of the circle in the space, making it whole again. Sometimes, to make things right—to find peace—we need to put things back the way they should be. That can be hard!**



Invite kids to form two circles facing each other and shake hands with someone in the opposite circle. **God invites us to find a way for peace.**

Pass out leaflets and markers.

What does it mean to be patient? Are some things harder to wait for than others? Allow time for kids to respond. **Advent is about waiting and watching. Draw a line from each cloud to the word in the mountain**



that shows how hard it is to wait for what you see happening in that cloud. Invite kids to share their responses.

Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

A conflict is more than disagreeing about something. It can be a serious argument. Sometimes it feels like it would be easier to fight about something than to work for peace. Working for peace can be hard. Let's watch how the Whirl kids try to resolve conflict.

View Episode 1, "Advent Entrenched," on the Whirl Year A Winter Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What's the conflict about?**
- **Describe how bad the fight becomes.**
- **What did Ruby say to make them stop?**
- **How do you resolve conflict with friends or family?**
- **What words and actions do you use to create peace?**



Pass out Whirl NRSV Bibles and help kids find Isaiah 2:1-5.

Do the Advent 1 Preview Activity together on page 783 and compare responses.

In the verses we will read today, Isaiah is talking to people who live near mountains. They know a mountain must be really big if it towers over all the others. Isaiah tells them about a mountain so big that everyone can gather there and work toward peace. On that mountain they can take weapons of war (swords and spears) and turn them into gardening tools (plows and pruning hooks) to help plants grow. When God's people gather together, we can grow in our understanding of what it means to live together in peace.



Read Isaiah 2:1-5 in this creative way together: Have kids take turns reading aloud, one verse at a time. Then ask them to find a partner. **Find and underline words or phrases that show action in each verse.**

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- Describe what God says all nations and peoples will do.
- How would you turn a weapon into a gardening tool?
- Which word or phrase that you underlined describes something you could do to make peace?
- Being peaceful sometimes means finding a safe place to just be you. Where do you feel safe?
- How does your family, school, or church help you feel safe and peaceful?

BIBLE BIT

- In 1979, US President Jimmy Carter and the Egyptian and Israeli leaders each used the phrase "swords to plowshares" when signing a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt.

WATCH IT AGAIN

- Have kids *arbitrate* between Ruby's side and Leo's side for an agreement in the Advent-Christmas hymns conflict.

OUR CHURCH

- Explore the organizations your congregation supports to advocate for peace in the world.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out pens and soft modeling clay (1 small ball per kid).

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **Why do you think people fight?** Allow time for kids to share. **Isaiah told the people that in God's house, weapons of conflict will be transformed into tools of peace.** Ask kids to sit with their Bible story partner. **We're going to explore peaceful transformation using our leaflet and a ball of modeling clay.**
2. **Imagine how you would feel if you found out a friend was telling lies about someone else at school. Write down those feelings in the first "Before" frame.**
3. **Mold the clay into a shape that represents those feelings.** The creation doesn't need to look like anything other than an artistic impression.
4. Invite the partners to talk about something they could do to create peace in that conflict. **How do you feel when that situation is resolved peacefully? Write those feelings in the first "After" square. Then reshape the clay into something that represents those feelings.**
5. Repeat steps 3–4 with this situation: **Imagine how you would feel if one of your friends told you they didn't want to be friends anymore.**
6. Repeat steps 3–4 one more time, but ask kids to work with their partner to come up with their own conflict situation. Give kids time to share their conflicts and resolutions.
7. **Isaiah said that God's house will be a place of peace. How can we help bring peace into our everyday lives at school? At home? Where else?**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Plowing is hard work. Peaceful actions aren't always easy. Choosing peace takes work too. Where are places of safety and comfort you can go when finding peace seems too difficult?

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pens.

What conflicts have you heard about in the world? Inside the dove's wings, write the name or a description of someone who can help create peace, and a way you can take part in creating peace.

Send kids out.

Invite kids to form two circles facing each other and shake hands with someone in the opposite circle. **God invites us to find a way for peace.**

Pray together: **Dear God, direct our eyes, ears, and minds to you—to look, listen, and learn your peaceful ways. Help us seek peace where there is conflict. Amen.**

Thank kids for considering how everyone contributes to peace. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.