

Isa. 11:1–10

Ps. 72:1–7, 18–19

Rom. 15:4–13

Matt. 3:1–12

Peace All Around

**Goal for
the Session**

Children will hear the description of peace from Isaiah and translate it into a picture of peace for today.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Isaiah 11:1–10

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Bruce C. Birch

The vision of harmony in verses 6–10 is often referred to as the vision of “the peaceable kingdom.” The image is of a return to Eden when God’s reign is finally consummated. When the anointed one described in earlier verses ushers it in, broken creation becomes the completely harmonious creation God intended. The earth will now be filled with the “knowledge of the LORD” (v. 9). This Hebrew term for knowledge is more than cognitive information; it is the full entering into and experiencing of what is known. So the earth will be infused with the reality of God, and it shall be as comprehensive as the waters of the sea (v. 9).

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Noel Leo Erskine

The church is not the kingdom of God, but its relationship to the kingdom signals its mission. The realm of God shines through the witness and mission of the church as the poor have good news preached to them and are judged with righteousness and equity. The Messiah awaits the church in a future of righteousness marked off by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of God, beckoning the church to a new future not of its own making but one made possible by YHWH. The challenge is not to be stuck in the traditions of the past but to be open to the new realm in which the proud will be punished, the humble will be exalted, and the practice of justice will be the order of a new day.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Stacey Simpson Duke

This is how hope gets its start—it emerges as a tiny tendril in an unexpected place. Where are the stumps in our own lives; where do we feel cut off? Can we imagine or believe that even now God might be nurturing the growth of something new and good from our old, dead dreams? Consider what areas of our lives most need the promise of new life, and how we might become open to such newness. Isaiah’s promise is not just a future one; even now there are tiny signs of hope and life in places that look dead and discarded.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Paul Simpson Duke

What of the “little child” who leads them? Shall Christians think of Jesus again? We should not make this move too quickly. Like the calf, lamb, kid, and ox, the child stands for the vulnerable, and is joined by others even younger and more vulnerable, happily playing in a safe world at last. Why is it the child who leads the whole bleating, mooing, yipping, snuffling, roaring, giggling company? The new creation wants a human presence—new, bright, undefended, and free—to love and care for it all.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 11:1–10

Focus on Your Teaching

In this electronic culture, where news stories are immediately available, children cannot be shielded from terror and violence. Children of all ages express their longing for peace: at home, in school, throughout the community, and in the world. They find hope when they learn how adults are working to bring peace and that God desires peace for all creation. Children are accustomed to the idea of animals doing things out of the ordinary, and they will gravitate to the images of animals in Isaiah. This session concentrates on verses 1–2 and 6–10.

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ four purple or blue candles (real or battery-operated)
- ❑ purple or blue cloth
- ❑ offering basket
- ❑ Bible
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023; CD player
- ❑ Color Pack 1, 29, 30
- ❑ matches
- ❑ Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- ❑ option 1: newspapers or articles, newsprint, 8½" x 14" plain paper, markers
- ❑ option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2
- ❑ option 3: Color Pack 2, Bible, drawing paper, newspapers, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, paper towels, fine-tipped markers (optional)
- ❑ option 4: newspapers and magazines, copies of Resource Sheet 3, fine-tipped markers, ribbon, scissors, glue sticks, hole punch

God of peace, I too long for peace in our world. Give me the courage to search the words of Isaiah for your message of hope. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, cut apart the animals on Color Pack 1. Place a bookmark in the worship table Bible at Isaiah. Use the color of candles and cloth that is used in the sanctuary.

As the children arrive, have them help you prepare the worship table with the purple or blue cloth, Advent candles, Bible, and offering basket.

When you are ready to begin, invite the children to be seated. Light two Advent candles.

Welcome the children to a new church year. Introduce any guests. Light two Advent candles. Have everyone stand in a circle. Ask the group to respond with “Come, Lord Jesus!” whenever you signal by raising your hand and to do what you do as they say it. Lead this ritual:

Leader: *Advent is looking back to Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem.*

All: Come, Lord Jesus! (Shield eyes with one hand as though looking into the distance, look back over one shoulder.)

Leader: *Advent is looking ahead to Jesus’ return to rule one day.*

All: Come, Lord Jesus! (Shield eyes with one hand, point forward with the other hand.)

Leader: *Advent is looking into our hearts for Jesus’ presence today.*

All: Come, Lord Jesus! (Cross arms over chest and bow head.)

Leader: *Come, Lord Jesus, teach us your word of peace. Amen.*

All: Amen. (Raise both hands above head.)

Read stanzas one and two of “Four Candles” (Color Pack 29). If you take an offering, receive it now. Extinguish the candles.

On Advent 1, review the message God had for Isaiah to give to God's people (Isaiah 2:1–5).

Place the animals cut from Color Pack 1 on a table. Invite the children to select one and tell all they know about that animal. (Some animals may be chosen more than once.) After the last animal has been described, explain that the Bible passage for this session includes these animals.

EXPLORING

Have a child retrieve the Bible from the worship table and open it to the bookmark at Isaiah. Explain that the story today is also from the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. Have the child turn to chapter 11.

Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Another Advent Message from Isaiah). Review it with these questions:

- ✧ Why did Isaiah have a message from God for the people of Judah?
- ✧ What was the good news in this message?

Listen to “A Shoot Will Rise” (Color Pack 30; track 1 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*).

Distribute the animals from Color Pack 1 to the children. Give some children two animals, if necessary to distribute them all. Read verses 6–10 as the children act out what is happening. Ask:

- ✧ What surprises you about the way the animals act in these verses?
- ✧ Why would these verses give the people hope for a better world?
- ✧ How would the world today be different if we had God's peace?

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so the children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest children who can work on their own.

1. **Visual Prayers** Prayer is one way God's people participate in God's vision of peace. This visual prayer is a way for children to express their hope without words. Set out newspapers or selected stories about problems in the world for the children to read the headlines or the articles. Encourage children with advanced reading skills to help others. Ask:
 - ✧ What are some big problems in the world today?

List their answers on newsprint, capturing each one in two or three words. Distribute 8½" x 14" unlined paper. With the long side horizontal, help the children fold the two short ends so they meet in the middle. Crease the folds. Open the sides for the children to draw a picture of one big problem from the list. Have each child cover his or her picture with the side folds for him or her to draw a picture of how it would look if that problem were solved or wiped away. Save the visual prayers for Closing.


**EASY
PREP**

Edward Hicks's famous painting *The Peaceable Kingdom* can be seen at: bit.ly/HicksPeaceableKingdom.

2. **Peace Table** Children learn ways to practice peace through conflict resolution. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Peace Table). Ask a volunteer to read Isaiah 11:9 on it. Suggest that a place where nothing was harmed or destroyed would be a place full of God's peace. Read the paragraph after the verse on the resource sheet. Invite the children to follow as you read the nine steps about meeting at a peace table. Try out the peace table process by asking the children to name a problem or disagreement between two people, such as an argument over what is the best sports team or how to share a bedroom with a sibling. After they have seen how the peace table works, ask:

- ✿ When do you think you could use the peace table?
- ✿ If you wanted a third person, who would you ask?

3. **Mural of Peace** Today's focus scripture has inspired many works of art. Show Color Pack 2. Invite the children to study it for a few minutes. Read Isaiah 11:6–10 aloud slowly as the children find visual images for the words. Invite the children to think of places in their schools or community where peace is needed. Provide paper, watercolor paints, and brushes for them to paint what peace would look like in those places. If time allows, they can add details with fine-tipped black markers. Display the children's artwork on a mural that includes the text of Isaiah 11:9 written out.

4. **Peaceable Kingdom Ornaments** These ornaments can be hung on the Christmas tree as a reminder of God's peace as described in Isaiah. Set out old newspapers and magazines, and have the children cut out words or small pictures that suggest peace. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 3 (Peaceable Kingdom Ornaments), scissors, fine-tipped markers, and glue sticks. Cut out the circles on the resource sheet and glue the words and small pictures on the blank side. Color the animals. Punch a hole in the top of the circle, and thread a 6" length of ribbon through it. Tie the ends to make a hanger.

Four Candles

Light one candle, Messiah
is coming;
wait and watch for his
Advent is near.
He will meet us on God's
holy mountain;
how shall we prepare for
his coming?
One. One candle to light
the darkness.
One. One candle to light
his way.

Light two candles, Messiah
is coming;
wait and watch for his
Advent is near.
He will come from the
family of Jesse;
how shall we prepare for
his coming?
Two. Two candles to light
the darkness.
Two. Two candles to light
his way.

CLOSING

Gather at the worship table. Light two candles. Read the second stanza of "Four Candles" (Color Pack 29), inviting children to echo each line. Ask:

- ✿ What in these words reminds you of Isaiah 11?

Sing stanzas one and two of "Four Candles" (Color Pack 29; track 8 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*).

Look at any visual prayers from Responding. Ask children to name ways they can show God's peace to others in the coming week.

Tell the children that you hope to see them next week. To each child, say:

(Name), *remember that God's love can be found in peace and hope. Amen.*

Another Advent Message from Isaiah including Isaiah 11:6–10

God chose men and women to give God's message to the people. These men and women were called *prophets*. Isaiah was one of the most famous prophets of God. Isaiah lived about 700 years before Jesus was born. His message was for the people who lived in Judah.

When Isaiah was a prophet, countries were at war all over the place. Each king wanted power. It was so terrible that the people of Judah who were God's people trusted the leaders of these countries instead of trusting God.

Not only did they not trust God, but they were not living in the ways that God had shown them. They did not treat others fairly. They were mean. And they worshiped other gods.

God's message to Isaiah for the people of Judah was that their nation would be destroyed by a foreign army. But the message from God also included hope. Listen for signs of hope in this part of the message given to Isaiah by God:

Someone from the family of Jesse will come. This one will be wise and strong.

This one will know and worship God. This one will be filled with God's spirit.

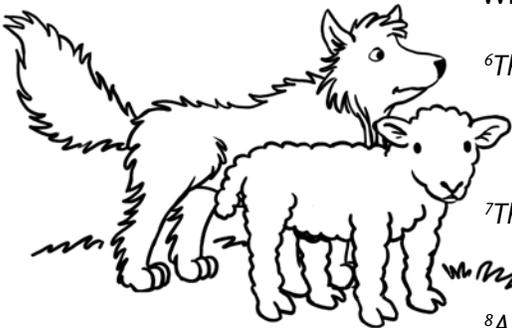
When this one comes, the world will live in God's peace.

⁶The wolf will live with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;
the calf and the young lion will feed together,
and a little child will lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear will graze.
Their young will lie down together,
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.

⁸A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.
⁹They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the LORD,
just as the water covers the sea.

¹⁰On that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a signal to the peoples. The nations will seek him out, and his dwelling will be glorious.



Peace Table

*They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the LORD,
just as the water covers the sea (Isaiah 11:9, CEB).*

You have a part to play in bringing peace to the world. When you have a problem with someone, come together at a peace table. This can work with friends, brothers, sisters, cousins, parents, or just about anyone. Here's how it works!

1. Choose a place to be your peace table. It can be a table in your house or two chairs outside. Really, any place can be a peace table, but look for a comfortable and safe space.
2. When there is a problem between you and another person, say, "We need a peace table." (Sometimes it helps to have a third person at the peace table.)
3. Begin with a short prayer, asking God's Spirit to be with you and to guide you to a way of peace.
4. Take turns talking and listening. Say how you feel. Admit where you made a mistake. Here are some ways to get started:
 - I felt angry when . . .
 - I made a mistake when . . .
5. Ask the other person to forgive you for your part in the problem. Tell the other person that you forgive her or him.
6. Together, think of solutions to your problem or disagreement. Here is where a third person can be helpful.
7. Tell each other what you want to do next to make things better between you.
8. Thank the other person for coming to the peace table.
9. Thank God for showing you the way to peace.



Peaceable Kingdom Ornaments

