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# GOD'S UNIMAGINABLE SUPRISES

AN ADVENT RESOURCE FROM GCORR

WEEK 1 - CAN YOU IMAGINE?

## **ISAIAH 2:1-5 (NRSV)**

1 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

3 Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

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## **SERMON STARTERS**

- Isaiah proclaims that there is a day coming, the day of peace when ALL people will gather at God's mountain to learn and live in God's way and the world will no longer feel the need for the weapons of war. In the world where there is so much violence and discord among people, this proclamation of Isaiah is an unimaginable surprise. The political chasm among opposing thoughts and beliefs, war and violence among the nations, racism and discrimination towards the "other", mistrust and fear of another all seems unresolvable and we wonder how can this be? It is very hard for us to imagine the world Isaiah is proclaiming. But imagine, we must. Because through our imagination, we can see the vision of God in the words of Isaiah just as this is the "word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw"(vs.1). And when we see the world God has in mind for us, then we can actively join and participate in what God is doing to make the vision a reality. When we imagine and see, then we can begin the creative process of living into the world that God envisions for us. This Advent season, this season of preparing and waiting for the coming of Christ, we need to fire up our imagination if we are going to

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faithfully prepare and wait for the coming Christ. Can you imagine people of all color, culture and language, from all corners of the world streaming to God's mountain? Can you see their faces and see who are not included in our church and ministry? As you prepare and wait this Advent season, what can you do to ensure that these siblings are included?

- Isaiah proclaims a day when "...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks..." He envisions a day when tools that were used to destroy life are now turned into tools that are life giving. This is God's unimaginable surprise. The world without the need for swords and spears is surprising enough, but that they would actually be turned into tools of tending and growing life is the surprise that is beyond our imagination. Who would have thought that the swords and spears, the tools of war and destruction can be turned into tools to help life grow and flourish? As God the teacher, judge and arbitrator works with humanity to bring people together as the beloved community, there is transformation of about face, of 180° change in the way people relate to each other and treat one another. It is not the swords and spears themselves that change into plowshares and pruning hooks. It is the people who use them who no longer found the reason to use them for destruction, but found new ways of being and thus needed new tools for their new life. So, what are the "swords and spears" in our world? It can be the systems of oppression in place where power is used to dominate, exclude and discriminate diminishing the lives of those who are told in so many ways that they are less than. It can be our attitudes, biases (conscious and unconscious) and actions that undercut the value of others and God given dignity. What about our words? How many times are words used to cut the heart of others into pieces causing pain? In this season of Advent, how would the world be different if we start beating our "swords and spears" into tools that helps justice, love and encouragement grow?

## **CHILDREN'S SERMONETTE**

Show the image (right) to children and ask them **"What do you think this is?"**

Entertain some responses from children.

If no one guesses, tell them, **"This is a picture of a vase for flowers. Doesn't it look like a nice vase? I bet it would look beautiful with flowers in it."**

Then ask, **"Do you know what this is made out of?"**  
Give children chance to respond.

Then say, **"This vase is made out of artillery shell casing that was used in a war. It was an instrument that was used to destroy life. And now, it is made into a vase to hold beautiful flowers."**



Image from <https://www.etsy.com/listing/722070933/trench-art-artillery-shell-militaria>

Continue by saying, **"In the book of Isaiah, Bible talks about the day of love and peace when weapons are no longer used, but turned into gardening tools that will help life to grow. Bible says, '...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'"**

**"Can you imagine what it would be like? No more fighting among countries and peoples, where people love and value each other and help each other to be their best?"** **"What do you think it would look like?"** Wait for responses from children.

**"Yes. This is the world God wants for us. But just like this vase that is made from an artillery shell casing, we have to do what we can to turn our words and actions to not harm others but help."**

Ask the children, **"How about we use our words during the week to love others? What are some words that show love?"** Invite children to respond. Then close by saying, **"Let's show love this week using these words we named. Amen?"**

**"Let's pray together. Dear God, help us to make our world filled with love as we use loving words to everyone around us. Thank you for teaching us how to love through your son Jesus Christ. Amen."**