

Epiphany 5A:

Isaiah

Although the reading is Isaiah 58, it addresses similar themes to Isaiah 65:17.

Storyteller: *Hold the tree in front of you.* I wonder what this is. It looks like a tree that has no life in it. It's brown and dead. But

sometimes things that look dead can be brought to life by God. And sometimes, things that look full of life are actually bad and lead to death.

Set the tree down in front of the children. God sends prophets to help us know what is good, and what is bad. A prophet hears God speaking, and speaks the words God gives the prophet to say.

Isaiah 58:1-12

I am creating new heavens and a new earth;
everything of the past will be forgotten.
Celebrate and be glad forever!
I am creating a Jerusalem, full of happy people.

I will celebrate with Jerusalem and all of its people;
there will be no more crying or sorrow in that city.

No child will die in infancy; everyone will live to a ripe old age.
Anyone a hundred years old will be considered young, and to die younger than that will be considered a curse.

My people will live in the houses they build;
they will enjoy grapes from their own vineyards.
No one will take away their homes or vineyards.

My chosen people will live to be as old as trees,
and they will enjoy what they have earned.
Their work won't be wasted,
and their children won't die of dreadful diseases.

I will bless their children and their grandchildren.
I will answer their prayers before they finish praying.

Wolves and lambs will graze together;
lions and oxen will feed on straw.
Snakes will eat only dirt!
They won't bite or harm anyone on my holy mountain.
I, the LORD, have spoken!

Story Materials

- Jesse Tree (a bare branch set in a base to hang ornaments from)
- Isaiah symbol box
 - sun-and-earth
 - hourglass
 - houses
 - grapes
 - tree
 - bundle of hay

Take the Isaiah symbol box in both hands, and hold it out to the children to see. Isaiah was a prophet who spoke God's words to the people of Israel. God's words bring life to everyone who listens to them. These are reminders of the words Isaiah spoke for God. *Put the symbol box down next to the bare tree.*

Pick up the first object: the sun-and-earth symbol. Hold it flat in your hand so the children can see it. When the People of God had been defeated in war, and sent away from the Promised Land as refugees, they were all terribly sad. God gave Isaiah promises to comfort God's people, and they are promises for us, too.

First, told them God said "I am creating new heavens and a new earth; everything of the past will be forgotten. Celebrate and be glad forever!" *Hang the sun-and-earth symbol on the tree.*

Pick up the second object: the hourglass. Isaiah told God's people that God's will for them is to live long and happy lives. *Hang the hourglass symbol on the tree.*

Pick up the third object: the houses. Although the people were far away from their homes, God promised them that one day they would be able to return to their home, and build houses there,

and live in them. *Hang the houses symbol on the tree.*

Pick up the third object: the grapes. They would be able to plant vineyards – gardens where they could grow grapes year after year – and they would be able to gather and eat the grapes that they grew. *Hang the grapes on the tree.*

Pick up the fourth object: the tree. Hold it flat in your hand so the children can see it. God wants god's chosen people will live to be as old as trees, and to enjoy what they have earned. *Hang the tree on the tree.*

Pick up the last object: the bundle of hay. Hold it flat in your hand so the children can see it. When the time comes that all God's promises are fulfilled, even the animals will have peace and love. Instead of animals eating other animals, they will all eat Hay! They won't eat one another, or bite, or harm anyone! *Hang the hay on the tree.*