

Hear the song of the lark when it is still in its egg. Sermon on 2nd Advent Isaiah 35, 4-10



3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." 5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams

in the desert. 7 The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. 8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. 9 No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

"The road to paradise is long!" That was the first thought that struck me when I read today's text from Isaiah. This is because Isaiah speaks of a world that we do not know at all today. It is a world that is being fundamentally changed for the better. The change he speaks of moves not only hearts but the whole world. Even the animal world is being introduced to a new, hopeful reality. Instead of deserts, poisoned seas, nuclear war and climate change, nature is blossoming and is being changed so fundamentally that past illnesses and weaknesses are completely forgotten. The road to this paradise is long from our perspective. So long that it seems impossible or fantastic. And yet this view is important. Because looking into this new future not only opens our eyes and ears to the new reality, but also strengthens us to change the present that we are experiencing. Looking into the future gives us new strength in our legs, so that we are no longer paralyzed, but can get up even in a dark time full of crises and depression and move towards this new reality. When Isaiah first spoke these words, the land of Israel had been transformed into a desert by war and scorched earth. Strong enemies surrounded Israel and the situation was completely deadlocked. There was no hope of political unity or military power. And it is precisely into this deadlocked situation that Isaiah's words come, speaking of a new future. And the question that arises from Isaiah's words is this: What can be said as an answer in a situation that is so deadlocked that there is no way out at all? And are there ways to make a fresh start when my world as I knew it has collapsed into meaninglessness? And what if I have been dealt a bad hand in my life from the

very beginning? Or maybe one or the other is asking themselves: What will become of my church, which is also having less and less room for maneuver on all sides? What can you say in a hopeless situation so that people's eyes don't just see the darkness and hopelessness, but also the rising of a new sun? And what can you make people hear so that they don't just hear the grumbling and worries about the future, but also the harmonious sound of a new future and a new world? There are too many people in our time who can no longer believe in the future. Children are practically brought up to have no expectations for their career, family or life in general. But it is precisely at a time like this, when everything seems hopeless, that Isaiah sharpens our eyes and ears for the new and for the completely different. To see this new future and hope, we need a prophet who looks behind the scenes. Who can see not only the oppressive present, but also the future. Here is an example from the Second World War: In a small town, it became more and more apparent that the town would soon be taken. The residents of the town could hear the cannons getting ever closer. It was in this situation that a teacher spoke of hope. And he said the following words: "Especially when you hear the roar of the cannons, it is all the more important to keep your ears open for the song of the lark." The same teacher continued and said: "Above all, in bad situations, we should not only hear the lark singing with our ears, but hear in hope the song of the lark while it is still in its egg! What becomes clear from this example from the Second World War is that we need a completely new vision that will transcend our present and point the way to the future.

Isaiah does just that. The key and pivotal point of his speech is a very simple sentence: Isaiah looks into the future and says: "Look, there is your God!" This sentence makes it clear that it is not just about illnesses being healed, the blind being able to see or the lame being able to walk. It is also not just about our world being saved from the terrible catastrophes and wars of the world, but about God being among us. The world is healed by becoming God's world again. Conversely, this also means that God becomes God to us humans again. Our alienation and separation from God will be overcome and dissolved. Nothing will be able to exist as separation between us and God. We will live from him right and with Him in a very practical way. God will become the very center, so that I will experience the words of Psalm 73 very concretely: "If I have only you, I care nothing about heaven and earth. Though my body and soul waste away, you, O God, are always the comfort of my heart and my portion." It is precisely this vision of God among us that Isaiah sees and gives hope in a hopeless situation. Throughout his life, Jesus repeatedly made exactly the same vision a reality in a very concrete way. On the one hand, by giving sight back to the blind or hearing back to the deaf. On the other hand, however, he always had an eye for the song of the lark in hopeless situations, which was still hidden in its egg. Through the parable of the prodigal son, he shows us that the father can recognize his son, who has fallen into sin, even in his dirty clothes, and dares to create a new future with him. The father does this even when the present and the past of the son have clearly proven that the son is completely unreliable and has committed a great crime. Even if he only came back because he wanted to fill his belly, God's love is greater than the sin of the prodigal son. God's love is also like that for us humans. It is always ahead of us. Always greater than us. And God always has a goal for us, even if we can no longer see the same goal. Because we

cannot see, hear or taste this future, we remain paralyzed. We then remain without God and without a future. That is why it is so important that God's word is proclaimed into our hopeless world. The seed of the word will fall into the dark earth of grief and depression and make new life possible there. New life where you did not expect it. Then tired hands will be strengthened and faint knees will be firm again. Anyone who knows the tiredness after a long walk knows that when you are exhausted, you are exhausted and there is no way past this overwhelming tiredness. So what is the reason that a person who is basically completely exhausted gains new strength? How can it be that a person who is tired and weary in spirit gains new strength? There must be a reason for this strengthening of the hands and feet and it cannot just happen on its own. What reason do we have to tell the tired and exhausted that they can get up again? With what authority do we do that? With what authority do we tell a person who feels abandoned by God that God is nevertheless close? What can we do to counterbalance spiritual powerlessness? Isaiah's words about tired hands and legs speak to our hearts. Because we often feel the same way. We know about God and want to believe in him. But there are so many obstacles in the way. There is sin, there are a million convincing arguments against God and there is the loud cries of war and death. And in this context, many people cry out: "Oh, I want to believe in heaven, but I can't!" The reason is in what is to come. Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, saw Jesus as the coming one. And so he says it quite openly and without any convoluted words: "YOUR LORD IS COMING!" The secret of the one who is coming is precisely this: that he is coming to us. Not just to the blind and lame of his time, but to us. HE is coming so close to me that it is really no longer my hands and feet that I am standing on, but his. And it is really true that it is not just my anxious and tired heart that is beating in my chest, but his. Through Jesus we sense what Isaiah's words from heaven can mean. On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus came upon a blind man. The blind man cried out: "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" This blind man was one who could see God in the dark. He was one who could hear the song of the lark when the lark was still in its egg. He saw Jesus when he was still blind. Be of good cheer! Do not be afraid! Behold, there is your God! With this word from the old book of Isaiah we get to see, even when it is dark. We get ears to hear, even when nothing but shouting and arguing characterize the present. Advent means that this God comes to us. Opens our ears and eyes. And strengthens our bones so that we can enter the new future. Amen.