

Hope in a God Who Comes Down

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at Christchurcheastbay.org. Good morning.

I'm Julie Brown and I'm part of the Tuesday night Berkeley El Cerrito Richmond Kensington group. Today's scripture reading is from the book of Isaiah chapter 16 verses 1 through 12 as printed in your liturgy.

A reading from the book of Isaiah. Oh that you would rend the heavens come down, that the mountains would tremble before the earth.

As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you.

[1 : 1 0] For when you did awesome things we did not expect, you came down and the mountains trembled before you. Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

You come to the help of those who gladly do right. You remember your ways. Who remember your ways? But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry.

How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

We all shrivel up like a leaf. And like the wind, our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you.

For you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. Yet you, Lord, are our Father.

[2 : 2 5] We are the clay. You are the potter. We are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord. Do not remember our sins forever.

Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people. Your sacred cities have become a wasteland. Even Zion is a wasteland.

Jerusalem, a desolation. Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors praised you, has been burnt with fire, and all that we treasured lies in ruins.

After all this, Lord, will you hold yourself back? Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure? The grass withers and the flowers fade.

Thanks, Julie. Good morning. Let's pray. God, we ask that you would fill us with the desperation of this prayer from Isaiah 64.

[3 : 3 5] Would you not just let us understand it, but would you let us feel this prayer? Would you fill us with desperation and hope at the same time?

And would that be the cry of our hearts, our one thing that we desire of you? That you would rend the heavens and come down and make all things new, just as you promised.

So fill us with faith in that hope. And we ask that you would exalt yourself in the preaching of your word this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. So starting today and for the next four Sundays of Advent, we're going to be in the prophetic book of Isaiah. And I'm calling this four-part series The Homecoming King.

Because that's what Advent means. It means coming. It means arrival. And for over 1,500 years, Christians have used these four weeks before Christmas, like Jonathan said, not just to look back and to remember how Jesus came at Christmas, but also to look forward to the final, the consummate coming of King Jesus, at which time he will make all things new and right and beautiful forever.

[4 : 46] Advent's a season for Christians to be reminded of how God's story and how our stories end, and how they end in Christ. And I think this is so important because for many of us, our default this time of year is to drift into the hallmark version of the Christmas story, right?

The sentimental peppermint mocha cozy commercial version of Christmas where we're all looking to experience or maybe recreate some of that Christmas magic, right?

To close out December on a high note and enter into the new year with warmth in our hearts. And honestly, I love that stuff. I'm totally about that. We got our Christmas tree the other day.

Later this afternoon, I'm going to put out my inflatable dinosaur with a Christmas hat on it. Got to add some Christmas cheer to the neighborhood. But listen, this is exactly why I need to observe Advent this season.

Because as happy as my penguin and dinosaur with Santa hats look as they wave and smile to our neighbors, the Christmas magic story that my dinosaur belongs to, it's not a substantial story.

[5 : 50] It can't bear the weight of my neighbor's actual real life longings. It can bring nostalgia, but not hope. It can decorate my community, but it can't heal it.

The truth is, while many of us put in extra work, right, to beautify our homes in this season, we do so but also quietly wondering, is there actually any hope for my home?

Can this place be as beautiful on the inside as I've tried to make it look on the outside? Many of us enter into this season with sadness because we know it'll take a whole lot more than commercialized Christmas magic to heal what's broken in our world and in our homes.

Hallmark's Christmas story can stir a fleeting feeling, but it can't sustain a lasting hope. And this is exactly why we need Advent. This is exactly why we need the story of the homecoming king.

Not a king who evacuates us from our broken homes, but a king who offers us an even better hope. A king who comes to make his home among us, even in our filth and our mess and our brokenness.

[6 : 53] The only kind of king who can heal our homes inside and out. A king who is God himself, dwelling among us. God as our homecoming king, this is the hope of the world. And this is the message of Advent.

That's going to be our focus this morning. We're going to look at hope, peace, joy, and love these next four weeks. We're going to look this morning, though, at the hope. The hope of Advent. But listen, for those of us entering into this season and wanting to enter it rightly, it's got to be more than us just understanding the hope of Advent.

Like I prayed, we have to feel this hope. Jesus was never content to have us just understand things with our heads. No, he always wanted us to feel and believe them with our hearts. Hope isn't something you just agree to in your mind.

It's something that happens inside of you. It reshapes and reorients you toward God's perfect future instead of the future of your own making. And this is why I chose to open up Isaiah 64 for us this morning.

This bold, almost like unhinged prayer from the people of God. I don't want us to just learn about this prayer. I want us to feel it and to make it our own and to let it take over our hearts and capture our imaginations.

[8 : 02] I want us to be so filled with the hope of this prayer that we cannot help but desperately beg, deeply tremble, and daringly await the advent of God with us.

And those are our three points. So let's start with the first one. Let's open up Isaiah 64. Begin with point number one. When we really hope, we desperately beg.

Now, just to give you some context for this prayer, it doesn't come out of nowhere. And please just try to stay focused on this. This is very important. If you want to open your Bibles to page 607 in the pews, we're going to look at Isaiah chapter 61.

This comes three chapters before our text today. And in Isaiah chapter 61, what's happening there is there is this prophetic vision of this one called the Anointed One. He's this spirit-filled redeemer who's going to come and make all things right and new.

This is the same passage that Jesus quotes when he's in the synagogue. He opens the scroll and he says, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news and bind up the brokenhearted and proclaim liberty to captives, comfort all who mourn, and exchange beauty for ashes.

[9 : 08] So you have this anointed one who's about to do amazing things in Isaiah chapter 61. But before he comes, this anointed one, he does something super interesting that I never noticed until I studied this passage again this past week.

If you turn to the next chapter, Isaiah chapter 62, the anointed one in verses 6 and 7, he says something super interesting. Listen carefully to what he says. He says, Now did you hear that?

Never be silent. Give yourselves no rest. Give God himself no rest. Do you know what the anointed one is basically saying here? He's basically saying, Do not stop pestering the heavens.

Do not stop crying out to your Father in heaven, Thy kingdom come. Thy kingdom come. Thy kingdom come. It's like he's ordaining his people to a holy ministry of nonstop nagging.

This is 24-7. This is a 24-7 prayer vigil. And not just over Jerusalem. You have to understand that for them, Jerusalem was the center of the entire cosmos. And in the rest of Isaiah, you have this not nationalistic vision, but you have this international cosmic vision.

[10 : 31] So the anointed one here is basically establishing a 24-7 prayer vigil for the people of God as they await his arrival. And why would he do that? Because the world is too broken.

And because God's presence is too precious to do anything else. But beg the heavens day and night, night and day. So what our text this morning is, what Isaiah 64 is, it's the culmination, it's the climax of these hope-filled, longing-soaked prayers of the people of God lifted up to heaven day and night, night and day.

And this isn't some tidy, polite, you know, pious, precious moment, Charlie Brown kind of prayer. It's not that, you know, five-second prayer that you utter when you're half asleep and your head's about to hit the pillow.

No. This is intercessory prayer out of a real hope that's born out of a real desperation. It's not an upright, kneeling, gentle, hands-folded prayer by the bedside.

No, it's clothes torn, teary-eyed, snot-filled, snot-running down your nose, full body, face down, begging and pleading to God prayer. It's a visceral prayer.

[11 : 45] Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down. It almost sounds violent, doesn't it? Like, God, rip it open, tear it apart, tear apart the heavens if you have to, and come.

Come down to us because we desperately need you here. It's a prayer that's absolutely clear about what it is hoping in. It's a plea that absolutely is convinced about the only possible hope that the world could have.

It's a picture of what Christian hope does in a person who has the eyes to see the coming of God as the only future worth having. The only true hope of the world. We desperately beg when this hope gets inside of us.

This is praying from the bottom of the valley, praying with your back against the wall, praying when you know that you're completely out of options and that God is your only hope for deliverance.

This is what happens when real hope takes over our hearts. When we realize how helpless and hopeless we are without our maker, redeemer, sustainer, and friend, we cannot help but call upon his name, begging him to do what only he can do.

[12 : 51] We need so much more than, you know, just a little bit of Holy Spirit pixie dust on top of our circumstances. No, we need him to tear the skies open and to come down and to be with us. We need him to shake things up seismically, things we thought immovable.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you. As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, Lord, shake what we cannot shake.

Move, melt, burn, boil what we thought impossible. That's what this prayer is asking for. But now the question is, is that our prayer in this Advent season?

Are we longing for the coming of the Lord with this kind of desperate urgency? Hungry for like a real seismic change, something beyond our wildest imaginations?

You know, verse 3 has continued to just stick out to me. This idea of God doing awesome things that says that we did not expect. And it got me thinking, you know, might it be that many of us are living lives where we're refusing to be surprised by God?

[13 : 59] And might that actually be a huge problem and a profound lack of faith? One author that I love, Anne Voskamp, she writes that there is no way to discover joy but as surprise.

There is no way to discover joy but as surprise. So like, what if our struggles have less to do with our shattered circumstances and far more to do with our unwillingness to be surprised by God, even in the midst of our shattered circumstances?

Because we've all got plans, don't we? Plans for our children, our careers, our marriages, our finances, our futures. But what happens when these plans get shattered like a broken pot of clay?

Is despair really the only option? Or what if instead we look forward with hope to the pleasant surprise our Father in Heaven has in store for us? Are we willing to be pleasantly surprised?

Surprised by joy? Surprised by a God who rends the heavens and comes down for our good? You know, I think a lot of us, we say that we want salvation for this world, this broken world.

[15 : 08] We say we want better days, a better world. But we don't actually long for God's new heaven and new earth. We just kind of settle for an amended earth.

No big surprises, just a couple alterations to suit our personal plans. And so we don't expect much from God. And we don't care to be surprised by God. We don't care to be surprised by joy.

Because honestly, most of us hate surprises. There's this one time, Chelsea, she will tell you that I hate surprises. And there's one time, right before we were married, she tried to surprise me with a nice gathering of all my buddies playing basketball together.

I had no idea. Then I showed up and they were all there and I was supposed to play basketball. And I found myself, like, completely unable to enjoy that. I really hated it, actually. And you know why?

I hated being surprised because I hated not being in control. But see, what if that's the point of God wanting to surprise us? To show us that it's always better for Him to be in control.

[16 : 10] And maybe, just maybe, that's also why so few of us ever actually pray this Isaiah 64 prayer, right? Because it'd mean that we need to let God be God.

Honestly, I imagine that there are many of you who haven't ever prayed like this in Isaiah 64. And I don't say that to condemn you. No, I just know that many of you haven't prayed like this because I know my own heart.

It's often hard for me, the pastor, with all my own comforts and distractions and privileges. It's hard for me to feel like I need to pray like this. But I wonder, I wonder if the reason many of us haven't prayed like this is not because God doesn't exist, but because He's been so kind, so generous, so patient toward us.

Or I wonder if the reason many of us don't pray like this is not because we don't actually need to, but because we don't want to. Because if we were to pray like this with such desperation, if we were to beg, it'd require us to open our eyes to the truth that we are far more vulnerable, far more limited, far more helpless apart from God than we care to admit.

Most of us don't pray like this, or at least not often, myself included, because we've spent so many years building a life that helps us avoid feeling this desperate. And we've filled our calendars and secured our comforts and managed our images and distracted ourselves just enough to avoid facing the truth that when, you know, that fecal matter hits the fan, and it always does, there's nothing that we can actually do about it.

[17 : 44] The truth that we cannot save ourselves. Think of all like the biggest problems that you personally face. Can anyone but God really save you? Honestly, I'm a pastor here.

I'm the pastor of care. I sit down and I listen to many of you. And when I listen to your struggles, sometimes I do think to myself, man, yeah, that is bad. That is hard.

No way the deacon's fund is going to solve that one. My sermon's not going to do it. My best pastoral counsel is not going to do it. But, you know, it's precisely in my attempt to shepherd this flock that I'm reminded that, man, the Lord, the Lord has to be our shepherd.

Because then and only then shall we truly not want. Like, He alone can restore our souls. He alone can lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. And, man, that's just on a personal, individual level.

But, like, think of all the biggest challenges in the world. Like, what will truly bring salvation to our suffering world? In the fullest sense of the word, eternal, imperishable, incorruptible shalom.

[18 : 50] What's it going to take? More diplomacy and politics? More therapy and counseling? More science and technology? More charity and goodwill? More hard work and wisdom? No, nothing from within this cursed creation can cure our cancerous corruption.

It's got to be something. It's got to be someone transcendent, incorruptible. Someone coming from the outside in. Creation cannot save itself. Only its creator can. So, see, when Christians hope, when Christian hope takes a hold of us, it brings us to the futility of, like, every lesser savior.

It brings us to the end of ourselves, and it brings us to the beginning of God on our knees, desperately begging. Begging for God to come down. I'm begging for his presence among us as the only possible solution to all our problems.

But the next question for us to consider is, well, then what happens when he comes down? See, Isaiah 64 doesn't just beg for this God to come down and expect him to arrive as a genie whose wishes are command.

No. We don't go from begging to bossing. Now, point number two. When we really hope, we don't just desperately beg. We also deeply tremble. Remember verse one.

[20 : 04] Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might tremble before you. When we hope for the presence of God that makes mountains tremble, we have to realize that his presence doesn't just make the mountains tremble.

It makes us tremble as well. So, yes, the hope-filled prayer of Isaiah 64, it begs for the presence of God. But then look at verse five. You come to the help of who?

Those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against your ways, you were angry. How, then, can we be saved?

There's this realization here that, yes, we know we need your presence, Lord. And, yes, we know you come to save the righteous who remember your ways. But what about those of us who aren't righteous?

Those of us who often forget your ways. Oh, no. We just asked him to come down and fire against his enemies. But wait a minute. What if we're actually his enemies?

[21 : 03] Like, yes, we need God to judge and condemn all that is wicked in the world. But what about the wickedness in us? Yes, we need a God who will fight our enemies.

But what happens when we are our own worst enemies and even enemies of God? How, then, can we be saved? It's a scary question to ask, isn't it? And if it doesn't make you tremble, then I wonder if you've realistically assessed yourself according to the standards of our holy God, the God of the Scriptures revealed to us in the Son of God who is crucified, bearing our curse, the filth of our sins in His body.

Do we realize that even our most righteous deeds, it says in verse 6, are but filthy rags before God? It could be translated filthy menstrual rags, our most righteous deeds.

And basically what this prayer is acknowledging is that everything we do is tainted by sin. And in case you're wondering how this could be, it might be that you just need a proper definition of sin.

This week I was sitting with someone who was exploring Christianity, and she asked me about what sin is, and she listed a couple things in her life.

[22 : 11] And it was kind of like asking me, are these on the naughty list? And, you know, I could have taken out the Ten Commandments and compared what she said with what's said there. I could have taken out, I don't know, a portion of 1 Corinthians chapter 6 or something like that.

But instead, I pointed her to Jesus, who when He was asked, what is the greatest commandment, what did He say? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

All the law and the prophets hang on these two, He said. So I told this woman, sin is less about is this action on the naughty list, and more about have I loved God and neighbor wholeheartedly.

And I put it this way because I hope to do two things in her that I think Jesus wants to do when He tells us what the greatest commandments are. One, I hoped it would help her see that the God of Christianity is far less interested in rule-following religiosity and far more interested in a personal loving relationship with us.

I wanted her to see that for sure. But two, I also wanted her to tremble as she considered just how high the bar for righteousness is in the eyes of our holy God.

[23 : 18] Like honestly, what's easier to obey? Thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not steal, or love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength, and love your annoying neighbors as yourself.

So you see, sin is anything that falls short of that high, high standard. And let's not kid ourselves. We all fall short of this standard. And this is how verse six can say that even our righteous deeds, our most righteous deeds, are filthy rags before God.

Everything we do, even our most righteous deeds, they're tainted by the uncleanness and impurity of our hearts. And thus, they are worthy, we are worthy of condemnation.

So truthfully, we don't just need to repent of our sinfulness. We actually also need to repent of our righteousness. For all the righteous things we've done for less than pure reasons, for all the times I've given to the poor, but less out of love and more to comfort myself, that I'm a good person.

For all the times I've come to Sunday morning worship, but begrudgingly and with my heart far from God. The teaching of Jesus in all the scriptures is that we all fall short.

[24 : 29] There is no one who does good, no, not one. And even 99.9% purity isn't good enough before our holy God. And that's if we live up to that.

Anyone, 99, anyone at that level yet? Come talk to me. None of us has reached 99.9%. And even if we did, do you realize that if 99.9% of planes landed in SFO and that like 0.1% didn't, we'd have three to four crashes at SFO every week.

If only 99.9% of newborns were delivered safely into the hands of doctors and midwives, there would be almost 400 dropped babies every day. See, when we realize that even 99.9% purity is not enough, it really drives home the question, how then can we be saved, right?

And perhaps that is a question that you're wrestling with today. How then can I be saved? You feel the weight of your sin, the guilt and shame. You're haunted by that long list of things you ought to have done but failed to do and that equally long list of things that you ought not to have done but that you still did.

You think of all the hurt and the damage that you've caused both to yourself and to others. And you totally identify with this conundrum here. Verse six, all of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

[25 : 52] This is like the complete opposite of the Psalm 1 tree, right? The tree that's planted by streams of water that delights in God's law. We all shrivel up like a leaf instead. And it says, like the wind, our sins sweep us away.

No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. And you read this and you're like, this is me. And you know what you deserve.

You deserve, we all deserve, not for God to come down to deliver us but for God to come down to damn us. So how then can we be saved? Well, the beautiful irony of the gospel is that it's good news for those who tremble.

The good news of Christianity is that salvation is possible precisely for those who feel the impossibility of their salvation. The good news of Jesus says that there is help for the helpless and hope for the hopeless and that blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

And blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled. So you see, real Christian hope doesn't just stick to a, doesn't just stick like a Hallmark sticker on our lives.

[26 : 56] No. It isn't a religious version of positive psychology and feel good vibes. No. When hope gets deep inside of us, it makes us desperately beg for God to come down.

It makes us deeply tremble at His coming. And yet, point number three, it still invites us in the middle of our begging, in the middle of our trembling, it still invites us to daringly wait for this God to come down and be with us at the same time.

When we really, really hope in Christ, we dare to wait for Him. Look back at what it says in verse four with me for a second. Since ancient times, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you who acts on those, who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.

And you have to understand how wild this is. Because this, this is the gospel. In this prayer, the people of God are saying, there is no God like Yahweh. No God who cares and who acts on behalf of those who wait.

Because see, in ancient times, every other would-be God waited on human servants to act on behalf of it. But here it's reversed.

[28 : 05] Here it's reversed. And this is what makes Yahweh, the God of Christianity, a one-of-a-kind God. No one has ever seen a God who so graciously acts for and on behalf of those who simply wait. We're the ones who get to wait for Him to act for us.

It doesn't say those who try hard, those who impress, those who perform, those who build cities and towers where there are tops in the heavens. No. Just those who wait for Him to come down. We saw this in the book of Genesis, right?

In Genesis chapter 4, after the fall, when Cain's people built cities and civilizations, what were the people of God known for? Simply for calling upon the name of the Lord. That's the posture of Advent.

Not climbing up, but calling up. And then in Genesis chapter 11 at Babel, when they said, let us build ourselves a tower with its top in the heavens. It was God who actually came down to them to see their puny little tower.

Even their greatest, highest achievement, God still had to come down to even see it. Instead of praying, come Lord, the people of Babel said, come let us go up to Him. But see here, this prayer in Isaiah 64, this is the anti-Babel prayer.

[29 : 08] It's the people of God calling upon the name of the Lord. We can't build our way up to you. We need you to rend the heavens and come down to us. We are done pretending that we can save ourselves.

So we will wait for you to act. And it's not because, you know, they're patient all of a sudden. No, waiting is hard. Waiting is scary. Waiting is vulnerable. But they wait.

They wait because these people know that it's their only hope. It's their only hope and therefore, they dare to wait. They dare to beg for the presence of God among them even if it makes them tremble and they dare to wait.

I love how verse 8 says, you know, after they've gotten real, they've gotten real about their sin before God, they still dare to call upon Him as their only hope.

Like, yes, even our righteousness is like filthy rags, yet you, it says in verse 8. And this yet is like everything. It's the gospel. Like, yes, we're filthy. Yes, we don't deserve a single thing from you, yet you, Lord, are our Father and our Potter.

[30 : 08] It doesn't say, yes, we're unworthy, yet we will try harder. We will try to clean ourselves up, do better next time. No, it says, yet you. See, the hope of the gospel emboldens the people of God to beg for the presence of God, not on the basis of our own character, but on the basis of God's character, and particularly in Him as our Father and as our Potter.

This is how we can be saved. It's the same way the prodigal son was saved by the benevolence and the forgiveness of His loving Father. The hope of the world is the love of the Father. Verse 9 says, do not be angry beyond measure, Lord.

Do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all Your people. Our great hope is a Father who calls us His own children.

That's why I love Psalm 103. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him. And as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a Father shows compassion to His children, so the Lord shows compassion to us.

[31 : 24] There is no other love like the love of our Father in heaven. A love so strong that He can put a ring on our fingers and just like that, our status is changed from estranged to heirs.

Just like that. A love so strong, He can completely cover our uncleanness with the robe of His righteousness and completely for free. Completely for free. Because, get this, if God is our Father, then God's Son is also our brother.

And remember, who do you think that ring belonged to? The ring and the robe that the Father put on His prodigal son. Who do you think that robe belonged to? Who do you think the fattened calf belonged to?

We've all squandered our inheritance. The rest belong to our older brother. But the good news of this benevolent family of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is that by God's gracious initiative, we can be co-heirs with Christ by faith.

Not at our own expense, but at Christ. Co-heirs with Him in glory. Isn't that crazy? From filthy rags to fine, fancy robes. This is the craftsmanship of God, the potter.

[32 : 30] See, if God is our potter, then we aren't just His children, nor even just His clay. We're His artwork. His masterpiece. Peace, to use Paul's language, we're His poema, His workmanship.

And maybe you're here today and you feel like the prodigal son. Like you will never be worthy of your father's love. Like He could never call you His child again, never accept you back into His household. Maybe you're here today and you feel like there's nothing good He could make out of the dry and broken clay of your life.

Like you just are just too cracked, too broken, bound to just be tossed and of no use or value to any potter. The true story that we celebrate at Advent is that when God rends the heavens, He makes beautiful things out of what the world despises as ugly and worthless.

When the Father sent His Son, when the potter became like the clay, and though He had no beauty that anyone should desire Him, at His baptism, the heavens tore open and the Spirit descended upon the Son of God and God said, I desire Him, I love Him and God could not keep silent about His love for His Son.

His love burst through the heavens to declare His love for His child and the beauty of Christianity is that if we are united with this Son by faith, if we place all our hope in Him, this fatherly love bursting from the heavens is just as much ours as it is His.

[33 : 52] By His sacrifice, He has cleansed us of our filthy rags. When Christ's body bore our sins on the cross and broke to pieces like a fragile piece of disposable clay, the veil in the temple was torn.

The veil that blocked access to the Holy of Holies, it was torn. And then, picking up the pieces of His Son's broken body, the master potter surprised the world with joy, the most beautiful masterpiece of all time.

Christ is risen, the firstfruits of new creation to come. The earth will one day receive her king. So you see, in the person of Jesus, we have the answer to the cliffhanger question at the end of this passage in verse 12.

After all this, Lord, will you hold yourself back? Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure? In Christ, we know the answer is no.

The Lord does not hold Himself back, nor does He keep silent and punish beyond measure. no, actually, He burst into the world and the eternal Word became flesh.

[34 : 59] For even the heavens themselves could not contain His love for us. And this, this is the gospel, the surprising salvation we never deserved, but always desired. So let's be desperate.

Let's beg for the heavens to come down, that we might experience that once again and see the world made new. Let's pray. Lord, do not let us be satisfied with these immovable mountains in our lives that we've just gotten comfortable with.

Lord, would you give us a faith that excites us about the way that you can shake up the mountains, these things that seem so immovable in our lives, these broken things, Lord God.

Give us a desperation for you to come down and make a difference and make us a people who are willing to be surprised by how good you are, by how wonderful of a story writer you are.

And help us to see that you've already given us a glimpse of this in your Son, Christ, who has come down and who's coming down again. Let us set our hopes on Him, Lord. In Jesus' name.

[36 : 18] Amen.