



HOMILY

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 65:1-7

GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NC

Sunday, November 2, 2025, All Saints Sunday

The Rev. Dr. Marcia Whitney Mount Shoop, Pastor

Isaiah 65: 1-7

I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask,
to be found by those who did not seek me.

I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
to a nation that did not call on my name.

2 I held out my hands all day long
to a rebellious people,
who walk in a way that is not good,
following their own devices;

3 a people who provoke me
to my face continually,
sacrificing in gardens
and offering incense on bricks;

4 who sit inside tombs
and spend the night in secret places;
who eat the flesh of pigs,
with broth of abominable things in their vessels;

5 who say, "Keep to yourself;
do not come near me, for I am too holy for you."

These are a smoke in my nostrils,
a fire that burns all day long.

6 See, it is written before me:
I will not keep silent, but I will repay;

I will indeed repay into their laps

7 their iniquities and their ancestors' iniquities together,
says the Lord; because they offered incense on the mountains
and reviled me on the hills,

I will measure into their laps
full payment for their actions.

This fall we have slowly been working through the Book of Isaiah—this ancient text is helping us to cultivate apocalypse.

This ancient text is supporting our capacity to receive the truth being revealed to us in this historical moment of apocalypse.

This ancient text is enhancing our capacity to accept and keep our eyes on the truths that are being revealed in this lifting of the veil.

Cultivating this truth means we are committed to working with these truths. We are committed to giving nourishment, to fertilizing, to pruning and weeding so that these truths can transform, can liberate, can break the cycles of idolatry, of denial, of repeated patterns of harm.

We have four more Sundays before Advent begins on November 30, the 5th Sunday of November. And we are spending these next four Sundays in Isaiah 65.

It's an apocalypse of a people who have lost their way, who have gotten sloppy with why and how they practice what they practice, their faith got lost in false piety, in worshipping false gods—that's idolatry. Their faith also got distorted in the trauma of deportation, exile, oppression, assimilation.

Colonized Christianity tells us over and over again to chalk up the idolatry to lapsing into the practice of other religions or allowing for multiple gods alongside the one God of the Abrahamic tradition.

Over and over again the prophets try to tell the people that idolatry is the false gods of the powers and principalities, of dominating power, of wealth accumulation, of tribalism, of distorted clinging to the wrong things—the things that dehumanize and break right relationship.

Chapter 65 in Isaiah is working toward a vision of the peaceable kingdom. As we continue to cultivate apocalypse, we are going to walk slowly toward the vision so that we can be careful to notice what creates the conditions for this vision to be given to the people.

These first seven verses tell us that the apocalypse, the unveiling includes our orientation to our ancestors.

(read passage aloud)

The apocalypse includes beginning to see ourselves as carriers of the impacts of the ways our ancestors got swallowed up by distortions, by idolatries, by survival modes and harmful patterns of living through their own challenges.

As we move toward the culmination of chapter 65 these next few weeks, it will become clear that as the people of God go back home, God is telling them they need to come back with new awareness of the generational trauma they carry, they need to come back with some of those patterns passed down through the generations disrupted, neutralized, healed.

This apocalypse, this shift in orientation toward the trauma of our ancestors means we can break the cycle—we can even change our biology.

The prophet in Third Isaiah is really talking about epigenetics.

Show Epigenetics video (3:30)

On this All Saints Sunday, we remember our ancestors, we honor them by truly seeing them for the complexity of the heritage they have given to us to cultivate—to nourish and to prune, to fertilize and to weed.

Remembering in apocalypse is not trivialized by trying to avoid the work our ancestors give us to do. When we remember, it is cellular not just stories. It is habits, susceptibilities, patterns and genetic predispositions. Remembering in apocalypse is not simply repeating, it is redeeming. Each generation can live out our legacy in being honest with ourselves about what we want to pass on to the next generation and what we do not.

We'll never know the difference if we don't really know ourselves and the ways our ancestors show up in our bodies, our habits, our mentalities, our biases, our proclivities, our best possibilities.

Our ancestors deserve our willingness to really see them—their wisdom, their strength, their vulnerabilities, their limitations.

We invite the great cloud of witnesses in because without them we can't heal and live into the new ways God is calling us to embody.

It's a stunning gift our ancestors give us—the chance to be transformed and be at home in the world in ways they could not—not simply for our selves, but for the healing of the human family, for the healing of the world—for the new creation to find fertile soil in us.

This table is where we catch a glimpse of what can be when we heal the things that rupture right relationship. This is a table of practice and promise.

As the ancestors come close, we make space for the next generation to show us the way toward God's creation healed.

Thanks be to God.

(Invite kids up to set the table)

(Invite improvisational invitation to the table)