

This past week, a friend of mine reached out to me and she was really distraught. She's having a lot of opportunities in her life right now and she doesn't know what to do. She doesn't know what to do. She feels lost and just at an absolute low inner life. And we are talking about why, why she felt this way. Her job had shifted. It wasn't the same as what she was doing because of cutbacks and layoffs and everything else. One of her children has been really sick and in the hospital. Her other child is developing her own identity, and she's afraid that with the latest things that are out there in social media that it's really going to affect and hurt her. And she lost a good friend, a friend of hers for 30 years.

Now, this friend of hers is also a friend of mine and he has been very animately about his hatred. Everything that he does right now is about hatred. He's calling on behalf of other people saying just terrible, terrible things. And he's bragging about this. He's bragging about all the hurt that he's putting on in the world right now. About how we're coming to a new age. The election brought him and a bunch of people out that are anti a number of things. And this really hurt her because she's been friends with this person for so long. And now he's coming out and he's preaching against everything that her family represents. He's talking about how everything that she's always done, everything that she's always been, is an abomination. And I told her, was he ever really your friend if he's saying these things now? Because he thinks it's safe for him to come out and say them. Was he ever really your friend? That much hate doesn't grow overnight. That much hate is inside someone for a very, very long time and that's not a reflection of you, that's a reflection of him and who he is. But there's still so much going on in her life that she feels lost, and she's scared and she doesn't know what to do next because things are changing all around her.

Well, I asked her if she knew the story of Isaiah and she said, yes. It's a book in the Bible. It's somewhere in the middle of the Old Testament. I'm like, no, no, no, I'm not asking if you know the book of Isaiah, I'm asking if you understand and know the story of Isaiah, because that's two different things.

When we read the Bible, some of us read it as everything is literal and that's what happened. Some of us read it as these are stories that were meant to interpret and understand. Isaiah's both. He is an actual person, and it's a book in the Bible. So we started to talk about Isaiah. He wasn't a priest. He was an advisor to the king. When the king died, his whole world changed. He had been an advisor to this king for a long time. He had sat next to him in the palace in the temple. All of his life revolved around this one part, this one person, and now he's dead. And everything is going to change for Isaiah. And that's very scary. It's a very scary part for all of us.

Yes, he's a prophet and he talks to God. And he hears God's wisdom and he sees God. But even with that, the actual physical world is going to change. In today's reading, Isaiah talks about seeing God in the temple. Since he wasn't a priest, he would have never been allowed into that part of the temple. All he could do is just see and look in from his seat next to the king. So when he talks about what he sees and what he envisions, it's the parts that he would know from sitting there. He would see the Covenant. He would see the drapes around the room. You would see all these inanimate objects, which wouldn't really have much meaning.

But his relationship with God, God is telling him and it's not about those inanimate objects. It's not about the things that you see. It's about your relationship with God. God is a

living God. He's not a cross on the wall. He's not a flag in the corner. He's not a hymnal at the end of the pew. He is all around us at all times. How we see him might be these symbols. These little things that interact with us every day. Well, interact with me every day but there are other things in the world to interact with us every day that resemble God.

You know, we're getting to the time of Advent; we're getting to the time of Christmas. We're going to start seeing Christmas trees everywhere, And wreaths, and bows and silver, and gold, in everything to remind us of God's love. It's the best time of year because everybody celebrates Christmas. Everybody shares in the love that God has for us every day.

It might just be the day after Thanksgiving until January 5th but it's a month where everybody celebrates happiness and love and joy together. We see that good everywhere we go. We see that love in everything that people do. Now Black Friday, we can kind of ignore. That's kind of a bad example, but the rest of it: Cyber Monday, Giving Tuesday is an excellent example about the time that we all come together and we all share God's love in a time that we're all feeling lost. They were feeling confused, scared for ourselves and we're scared for our friends, our family members. A time where so many people are throwing hate everywhere. We have promise, we have hope and love and joy coming to us that we can see in a living embodiment of all people. It's a great time.

And with that God turns to all of us, not just Isaiah in today's reading, but he turns to all of us. And asks who will follow me, who will help me, who is to be a part of this life. All of us can easily say I am here. We all celebrate his love. We all share his word and his wisdom and everything that we do every day. The people that don't will hide again. They will fall back and they will repent and do whatever they can to act like, well, I was just kidding. But we won't. We don't have to. Our love is out there and we show it every day and everything that we do. And it gets hard, times of change. We just need to remember that not only are we here for everybody, but everybody is also here for us. That God has looked at all of us. And we have all said I am here and we can help everyone at any time that needs us. Let us pray.