

Prophetic vision and comfort

By [Susan Kendall](#)

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Much is made in our time of creativity, imagination, and vision. Some lament that we have lost these qualities as a civilization; others search and find pockets of each like a light in the dark night.

Like the writer of Isaiah 66, we are left with a vision of creation as it is meant to be. We return to the theme of seeing beyond what we are certain of in the present. Call it a purposeful dissonance: the wolf and the lamb feeding together, lions content to eat straw. This passage just before the end of Isaiah is a holy vision, high and lifted up.

We require a divine vision from time to time and this one will serve us well, however ancient and odd. It demonstrates a hope beyond all we experience. And we need a divine mandate beyond our experience--both our experience of intellectual certainty and our experience of suffering. I am not suggesting that experience does not matter, just that in the midst of feeling and emotion and all that accompany it, vision can grow dim. Disappointment comes a bit too close.

Humans have a built-in shortsightedness. We will always need prophets to remind us of our choices.

Prophetic words ignite the spirit and heart, freeing us to dream dreams. This is not just watching a movie with a happy ending. Faith propels us forward to participate in a world full of problems, joys, and sorrows--our own and others.

Isaiah weaves a potent word naming loss and destruction with pages and pages of poetry on God's love and power. The promise is of comfort. A mother learns how to comfort a young child's first brush with pain. As that child grows, the means of comfort may shift; she meets her children as they are. Could God be any different?

When Jesus calls the 70, they go out two by two, learning how to be present to those they meet. This is our call, too: be present. Bring comfort. Restore and renew vision.