

## The Most Important Thing

Isaiah 2:1-5

First Sunday of Advent, December 1, 2013

The Rev. Kara Wagner Sherer

What is the most important thing in your life right now? Don't think too hard about it. What is the first thing that comes to mind when I ask you; what is the most important thing in your life right now? Now imagine that thing really is a thing, a thing that you can hold in your hand. Close your eyes if you want. The most important thing.

Perhaps the most important thing is shaped like a pyramid, with a square bottom and four triangles that meet at the top. It is heavy. It has weight. It is made of glass or diamond. And though you can't see the source it glows from within. You hold it in your hands in front of you. You can always see it. You never forget it. The most important thing.<sup>1</sup>

This was the image that came to me when I read the words of Isaiah this week. "In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it." Always I've heard these words as words of comfort and hope in Isaiah's historical and political context; words of comfort and hope in our context, a promise of peace and prosperity for everyone. But for the first time I noticed that the reason that everyone is streaming to God's mountain is that it is the largest mountain; it is the obvious place to go, and there is a path that leads right to it. No one is forced or guilted into going. Everyone goes because it is obviously the right place to be, the most important thing.

If the most important thing is so obvious, why do so many things cloud our vision?

When I was young my family spent our summers mountain climbing; serious mountain climbing. We would drive to a campground, then put all we needed for a week on our backs and hike to a base camp and set up to stay a few days. When the day came to climb the mountain we'd start out early with a small pack and hike all day. I can remember seeing the top of the mountain when I was tired and all the lifesavers had run out. There it is! I'd get a rush of energy and speed to the top. But sometimes I'd get there and just ahead would be another peak, the real top of the mountain. A false summit, it is called in mountain climbing terms.

Advent is a time when we are invited to set aside the false summits in our lives, the busyness, the stress, the distractions and anxieties and expectations, so that we can focus on the most important thing.

This weekend I was planning to relax at home, with nowhere to go and nothing to do. Instead I flew to Minneapolis for my step-grandfather's funeral. Besides the service I had nothing to do but sit and

---

<sup>1</sup> This image came after seeing the bulletin art for this Sunday, done by a young parishioner.

eat with family and old friends. Nothing at home mattered or my to-do lists for work, the most important thing was to be with people. We tell a story here about another death that wiped away all the unimportant things so that the most important thing could be seen, obvious and clear.

Today God promises to make the most important thing clear and obvious. We don't have to get to the summit today, but we are invited to take the first step on the path, trusting that God will clear away the false summits and guide us to the most important thing.