



*Your eyes will gaze on the king in his beauty,  
they will look on a country stretching far and wide.  
Your heart will meditate on past terrors,  
'Where is the man who did the counting?  
Where is the man who did the weighing?  
Where is the man who counted off the towers?'*  
No more will you see that insolent people,  
that people of unintelligible speech,  
of barbarous and meaningless tongue.  
Gaze at Zion, city of our feasts;  
your eyes will see Jerusalem  
as a home that is secure,  
a tent not to be moved,  
none of its tent-pegs ever to be pulled out,  
none of its guy-ropes ever to be broken.  
There it is that the Lord shows us his power,  
like a place of rivers and very wide canals  
on which will row no galley,  
over which will pass no majestic ship.

## Isaiah 33:17-22

They will look on a country stretching far and wide

## Friday of Advent II

To plumb the depths of depression and despair is common experience for both individuals and whole societies. In those depths there seems no end and no escape except in death. Darkness is all around us. This was the Hebrew's experience in their captivity in Babylon, for there seemed no possibility ever that they may one day be free and able to return to their homeland. These words were spoken into that darkness, keeping faith and hope alive even in the face of all odds which were stacked against fulfilment.

It is a model for the life of faith even in our own day: the conviction that God is with us in our darkness and will bring us through against all odds. Not only will God bring us through this dark time but the prospect of what lies beyond is of new life, new possibilities, beyond the value of anything we had and now is lost.

Advent challenges us to see that grace is found in, and not despite, the ambiguity of experience.