

Jesus - The Hope of the Nations

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 December 2018

Preacher: James Ross

- [0 : 0 0] Isaiah chapter 11 on page 696. We're going to think together for a few moments about King Jesus, the hope of the nations.
- So we've spent three Sunday evenings looking at the pictures, the promises of God's Messiah in this section from chapter 7 to 11 of the book of Isaiah.
- We find that in the middle of promises of judgment and exile to come, we find these beams of hope as we're presented with this king who will come.
- So once more, let's look at what Isaiah says to us about who is this king and what will his rule be like. So read with me again verse 1.
- Let's remind ourselves about this promise of a king to come. It simply says there, a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse from his roots.
- [1 : 0 5] A branch will bear fruit. So we've seen in this section the context that God's people are facing the threat of exile, being sent from their own land because of their disobedience to God, because of their false worship.
- And one of the things that will happen then as they're taken away to a foreign country is that their line of kings will come to an end. So this is a promise of hope that from the stump of the royal family, a shoot or a branch, a new king is going to come.
- So it's an image drawn from gardening, I guess. In our garden at home, we had a small tree that we cut down, left the stump in the ground, imagining that it would stay like that, having cut the life out of it.
- But this year, there was some new growth. The visible signs of life had gone, but the hidden life remained. And that's the idea here, that the stump that's being talked about is Jesse, the father of King David, the great king.
- And there's this promise that growth will come from the roots. David, the promised one isn't going to be just another in a line of bad kings. The people have got used to bad kings.
- [2 : 3 2] This is a return to the roots. This is a return to the good days. This is Isaiah, God through Isaiah saying, this will be another son of Jesse.
- This will be another David, a king after God's own heart. The imagery here actually gives us a reminder of God's grace.
- So in chapter 10, if you look up a couple of verses, chapter 10, verse 33, it says, See the Lord, the Lord Almighty will lop off the boughs with great power.
- The lofty trees will be felled. This is God saying that he's going to cut bad kings down to size. And that includes Israel's king. But despite Israel's failure, and despite the failures of Israel's kingship, God would still send his chosen king.
- God will be faithful, even when his people have been unfaithful. One of the reasons why Matthew in his gospel is so careful to highlight Jesus is in the family line of David.
- [3 : 3 3] He's born in Bethlehem, where David lived. It was to remind us that he comes as the promised one, Jesus, the true king after God's own heart.

And as we look at what Isaiah says about how this king will rule, we discover that no other king could possibly bring about this kind of fruit.

No other king would ever be described in this way, being spirit-filled, being perfectly righteous, bringing true peace and having global rule. This is none other than Jesus who's being talked about.

And it reminds us from the beginning that what we're talking about here is a king we all owe honor and loyalty to. This isn't just some small king. And we can say, well, that's the king for the people over there, but not for me over here.

All of us, as we'll see, owe devotion and loyalty to this king. And it's a reminder to us as a church. Our purpose is to live to worship this king and to serve him so that others might come to know him too.

[4 : 39] Now we pray your kingdom come because Jesus is the king we live to honor. So let's look at the qualities of the king that we find in this section.

First of all, we'll see that this is a spirit-filled king. Look at verse 2. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of power, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

So in the Old Testament, where we are, the first part of the Bible before the coming of Jesus, the Old Testament, if someone was filled with the Holy Spirit, that was a sign that God was giving them both help and authority for a particular task.

So if God wanted to raise up a ruler to rescue the people, then he would fill the judges, for example, with the spirit. Or God's prophets, whose job it was to speak for God, they would be filled with the spirit.

For some, like King David, the spirit seemed to take up residence in their hearts. It wasn't just for a season. But there's something unique about the king who's being described here.

[5 : 54] This king will be spirit-filled in a perfect way. And there's a clue for us in the number of times the spirit is referred to. If you were to count in verse 2 how many times the spirit is mentioned, you'd find he's mentioned seven times.

Seven being the number of perfection and completeness in the Bible. So this is God's way of saying, through Isaiah, there is a king coming and he'll be perfectly filled with God's spirit.

The spirit would rest on him. And of course, that's what we find at Jesus' baptism. Jesus comes to John the Baptist to begin his public ministry.

And when he is baptized, John sees the spirit of God coming down on Jesus like a dove, like a bird. And he hears a voice from heaven, this is my son who I love.

Those three pairs that we find are interesting, worthy of our attention, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding. This is a king who will be able to govern and rule well.

[7 : 05] He's given the spirit of counsel and of power. This is a king who will know the right course of action. He's given the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

He's able to apply God's truth to everyday life, to walk in perfect obedience. This king will be devoted to God. This king will have the wisdom of God.

This king will know God, unlike any other. And so because of that, there's hope. This is the king God's people, this is the king all people need.

Because this king, because he's perfectly spirit-filled, will perfectly represent to us the rule of God. And he'll give us the perfect example of how to live in obedience to God and to give him glory.

And when we understand that this is then applied to Jesus, we understand something of the uniqueness of Jesus, that he comes bringing in the kingdom of God because he is God, the son in human flesh.

[8 : 12] That he alone is sinlessly perfect. He alone has this perfect spirit-filled wisdom. But then Jesus also comes bringing the gift of the Holy Spirit to his church.

There's this wonderful reality that by faith, we are filled with the Spirit. So Peter, when he was preaching, shortly after Jesus returned to heaven, he said, repent, turn from your sin, and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

One of the ways that we have greater privileges than an Old Testament believer is that we now have the Spirit living in us as the people of God.

That's really important for us practically because it means that God lives in us and God is looking to transform us to make us more like Jesus.

And because God's Spirit lives in us, we actually can change to reflect more and more the character of Jesus. That we are able to love what he loves, to truly delight in God.

[9 : 23] One of the stories I was reading in the Bible this week was the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus, the tax collector who'd always lived for money, wanted to make more and more money, had cut himself off from society, really, because of his desire for money.

But he meets Jesus, and his heart is changed. And as soon as he meets Jesus and his heart's changed, he gives away half his money. And he promises to repay four times if he's cheated anyone.

Zacchaeus was given a new center to his life. The Spirit came, saw the glory of Jesus, was changed. The Spirit is the one who enables us to be obedient.

It's the Spirit who enables us to go on mission as we're called, to witness for Jesus in our family, in our workplace, among our friends. Jesus is perfectly Spirit-filled.

Jesus gives the gift of the Spirit to his church so that we might live for our King. The second quality of this King that Isaiah draws our attention to is the fact that he is righteous.

[10 : 29] We see that in verses 3 to 5. I guess we're, maybe most of us, familiar with the statue of Lady Justice.

You go to some law courts and you'll find a statue of a lady and she's blindfolded and she's carrying the scales of justice in one hand and the sword of justice in the other hand.

But she wears a blindfold to say that justice is blind, that justice is supposed to be impartial. That whoever we are, we're supposed to get a fair trial.

And here in a democratic country, one of the things that we value and we're thankful for is our justice system. We're thankful for democracy and a justice system that means that by and large, we find justice.

But all too often, when we look around the world, we discover that justice is not blind. We discover that those with money, those with influence, those with power, those with status, they can buy justice for themselves through corruption, through intimidation, through the sharing of favors with the impact that the weak have no voice and they have no defender.

[11 : 44] That was one of the things happening in Isaiah's time. That was one of the reasons why God was judging the people because of their injustice, because of their corrupt legal system.

And so Isaiah is saying to a people that were living with that corruption, that will not be the case when God's true king comes. Verse three, he won't judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears.

He's not going to make a superficial judgment. His judgments will be deeper. But with righteousness, he'll judge the needy. With justice, he'll give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He won't have a bias towards the rich. He won't discount the needs of the poor. This courtroom will be marked by a perfect keeping of God's standards of justice and fairness.

That thing that we value so highly, justice is the thing that God sent Jesus to bring. Verse five, is that lovely image.

[12 : 44] Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness, the sash around his waist. Clothes that we wear can be a marker of identity and our role.

So think about a judge in a courtroom. You know, you walk into a courtroom, you see somebody with a wig and a gown, you know, there's the judge. His job is to provide justice. Clothes indicate capacity and value.

This king represents righteousness and faithfulness. When you look at Jesus, you see someone who doesn't shift from God's perfect standards.

You see a king who is trustworthy. If you read the gospels, you read the accounts of the life of Jesus, you discover that righteousness and faithfulness are markers of his life.

That he was the one who went into the temple and he cleared the temple from all those corrupt money changers who were taking extra money from those who came to worship God.

[13 : 55] He is the one who made sure that the weak and the helpless received mercy when others would send them to one side. He is one who is positively for the outsider because Jesus is righteous and Jesus is faithful.

These are qualities that we look for in a society. So something we should pray for when we think about our national and local authorities, when we think about our justice systems, we should pray for those with influence and authority that we would see righteousness and faithfulness being exercised.

the next quality that we see of this king is that of peace. I think in verses six to nine we probably have the clearest evidence that this is no ordinary king that's being talked about because this is no ordinary peace that's being talked about.

This is peace promise that takes us to the hope of when God makes everything new at the end of time for his people.

So you look at the imagery and it's really striking. Verse six, the wolf will lie with the lamb, will live with the lamb. The leopard will lie down with the goat.

[15 : 18] The calf and the lion and the yearling together and a little child will lead them. What's that saying? There is a time coming when there will be perfect peace and perfect security.

When threat within the natural world will be no more. In fact, it goes further in verse seven to suggest that nature has been forever changed to ensure this peace.

The cow will feed with the bear, the young will lie down together and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The imagery continues in verse eight.

The infant will play near the hole of the cobra and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. The most innocent, the most weak can live in safety around these animals of danger.

Biblically, we can think about Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve in God's perfect garden. But then the snake came, the devil came and led them astray and everything began to go wrong and curse came on the world and curse came on the environment because Adam and Eve listened to the devil, to the snake instead of listening to God.

[16 : 32] Well, there is a time coming when that curse will be reversed. There is a time coming when perfect peace will be secured, when the snake will no longer be a threat to his people.

There will be a return to Eden, only better because it will be permanent. Verse nine, they will never, they will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The holy mountain was always the place where God met with his people. Garden of Eden, most likely, the imagery seems to point to it being a mountain garden and then you've got God meeting with his people at Mount Sinai to give them the Ten Commandments to make them his covenant people.

Jerusalem and Mount Zion, the mountain is really significant as the place where God and his people meet and enjoy relationship and here there is this promise there is a day coming when the whole earth will be God's holy mountain because all the people will know God.

Alec Motier, a Bible commentator says this, when the true order of creation is restored, the whole earth is the Lord's hill indwelt by his holiness.

[17 : 58] His people enter into personal and intimate communion with him. This is the goal of life. This is what we were made for.

We were made to know and enjoy friendship with God and here is this promise that for God's people, for those who trust in Jesus, the day is coming when we will enjoy that relationship forever and it will be unspoiled and unbroken.

this is one of these places where the Bible promises to us the kind of world that we all want. We would all love to live in a world where fear and uncertainty were gone, where we switched on the news and we didn't hear of tragedy, where threat and danger were a thing of the past, where we could live with peace and joy and hope and security and here is God's way of saying that day is coming for those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus as their King.

It takes us to the end of the Bible. We get this wonderful promise at the end of the Bible that when Jesus comes back again at the end of history there will be no more death and there will be no more tears and there will be no more pain, no more will God's people live with a fear of death, no more will we've troubled by sin, that guilt that we experience, that anxiety that people will find out what we're really like.

There will be no more broken or lost relationships. All will be goodness and joy and love and peace. And that's something that we can experience now.

[19 : 48] We can experience the peace of God now. The peace of God that passes all understanding we can look forward to enjoying that peace with God for all eternity but it means that we need to bow and submit to this king, this promised king, to Jesus the king.

We need to recognize that our sin and our rebellion is what breaks peace, it's what causes relationship to break down between us and God. and so we need the work of Jesus the king, the one who came to reconcile us to God.

That he takes our sin, he takes our guilt, he takes our failures and he dies on the cross for them to secure for us peace with God.

When we think about this theme of peace we want to remember to pray for the global church that suffer a lack of peace in ways that we can hardly begin to imagine.

Millions of our brothers and sisters who are in prison cells and in labor camps because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. But perhaps too when we think about the longing that we have in our hearts for peace and security perhaps we can think how we can speak the gospel, how we can speak good news to people living in an uncertain age, to people with uncertain futures, that we can present solid hope in the Lord Jesus Christ to those who feel like everything is shaking and unclear.

[21 : 32] The last quality of this king that Isaiah brings our attention to is the fact that he is an international king. He's a king for the nations. Verse 10 to 16 really is on this theme.

Another image of the king. Verse 10, in that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. So this is a battlefield image.

If you've ever seen battlefield scenes, often kings would ride out on their horses and they would have a standard bearer beside them, a flag bearer saying this is where the king is.

There'd be flags, there'd be banners, so the people would know. He's the one who's leading us into battle. That's the flag that we need to rally around. But notice this isn't just the king for the nation of Israel, that he comes as a banner for the peoples and the nations will rally to him.

So this is a message of hope to the nation of Israel, but it's a message of hope beyond them to all nations. Verse 12, same idea, he will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel.

[22 : 55] So there's this promise to those in Israel who've been sent away, one day you'll be restored to relationship with God, but not just you, the nations will be gathered in under the rule of this great king.

And then in verse 15 and 16, we're given a picture, again similar to what we were thinking about in Matthew 2. The imagery here is of a second exodus.

So there was a time when Israel were in slavery and God by his power worked mighty miracles to set them free. And one of the things that he did to secure their freedom was he dried up the Red Sea so that was a path that the people could walk to enjoy their freedom to become God's people.

And if you look at verses 15 and 16, you see the same imagery employed. With a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates river. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals.

There'll be a highway for the remnant of his people as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt. God is going to work to make sure that all his people from many nations will enjoy their freedom.

[24 : 18] They will enjoy their freedom as they follow Jesus the Savior, Jesus the rescuer, Jesus who comes to be like Moses for us, setting us free so that we can become the people of God.

Jesus, this banner reminding us that he is the king who has gone into battle for us. He's fought against the devil and sin and death for us and he's defeated those for us.

So he's come to be this great king that's promised, this spirit filled king, this righteous king, this king that brings peace and he's the king for all kinds of people, for all the nations.

Our God is a missionary God. God. So today, over a billion people would have gathered together in different locations, in different languages, different cultures to worship Jesus as Lord and Savior.

We're part, a tiny part of God's global church. But because God is an international God, we also remember that there is a task unfinished.

[25 : 29] So while one billion are worshipping Jesus as Lord, over three billion people today are completely untouched by the message of Jesus, have never heard of the love of God in the sending of his own son Jesus into our world.

And so as people of the king, we are called into mission to make Jesus known. Sometimes that means going to different parts of the world.

Sometimes that means sharing the good news with a neighbor, with a friend, with someone in our community. Towards the end of January, in church, we're going to have a missions day.

And one of the things we'll be thinking about are the opportunities that we have for sharing the gospel, sharing the good news of Jesus across different cultures, as God brings people from lots of different countries into Edinburgh.

But as we are given this wonderful picture of God's Messiah in Isaiah 11, God's Savior, we appreciate Jesus is this long expected king.

[26 : 39] We're invited to worship Jesus as God's unique and universal king. The one who is both spirit-filled and spirit-giver.

The one who is truly righteous and faithful. The one who brings peace with God and promises life marked by peace forever one day.

And he is the king for all the nations. This is the Jesus who came into the world as a baby, a baby born to be king, born to be God's Savior king.