

12/8/2019 - Isaiah 11:1-10

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- [0 : 0 0] The following sermon is from Grace and Peace Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Grace and Peace is a new church that exists for the glory of God and the good of the northeast suburbs of Hamilton Place, Collegedale, and Odo. You can find out more by visiting gracepeacechurch.org. With that, if you would look with me at Isaiah chapter 11.
- This is a famous passage and a really beautiful passage. So let me read from Isaiah 11. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
- And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide disputes by what his ears hear.
- But with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips.
- [1 : 1 6] He shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together and a little child shall lead them.
- The cow and the bear shall graze and their young shall lie down together and the lion shall eat straw with the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.
- And they shall not hurt or destroy and all my holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
- In that day the root of Jesse who shall stand as a signal for the peoples. Of him shall the nations inquire and his resting place shall be glorious.
- Amen. This is God's word. Let me pray for us. Our God I pray that you would tune our hearts towards you.
- [2 : 2 8] That you would let us see Christ and him exalted. That you would take the faltering words of my mouth. That you would take the meditations of all of our hearts.
- Our distractions. Our burdens. Our cares that we bear in this room. And that you would tune our hearts to sing your praise because of your goodness today.
- We pray in Christ's name. Amen. You may or may not know this. But the nickname of Portland, Oregon is Stumptown.
- I don't know if you've ever heard that. Maybe you've seen Stumptown Coffee. It comes from Portland. It's very hipster. You can only drink it when you're wearing skinny jeans. And Portland, did you? I don't know if you knew this.
- But there's like a dozen cities in the U.S. Who have the nickname Stumptown. And that's because at some point in all of these towns' histories. They had this season of massive growth and development.

- [3 : 27] And they would come in because they just needed wood. And they would just raise these forests everywhere. Cut down all the trees. And use the wood. And wouldn't have time to get rid of the stumps. And they'd just leave them.
- Stumptown. In Matthews, North Carolina. It was because of a big booming cotton industry. That they needed to just get stuff going. In Whitefish, Montana.
- It was because they put in this huge train depot there. And in Portland. They had this huge influx of people. In the early part of last century. And they cut down so many trees.
- Those beautiful forests up there. They cut them down so many. And so quickly that they called it Stumptown. And they didn't even make roads. People would jump from stump to stump.
- Because the roads that were there were just muddy ruts. Stumptown. It's kind of an interesting thing. I think there's a really cool image in that though.
- [4 : 25] A city. You can imagine a city that's just full of stumps everywhere. There's something really lifeless about that. Isn't there? Something really stark and barren. And despairing about a city that would be full of stumps.
- It's like the health and the vitality has been totally removed. It's careless. There's almost like a violence to it.
- You'd never get people in Portland to do it this way now. But that's the way that it happened. It's almost like when somebody starts in chemotherapy treatment. And their hair begins to fall out.
- And their hair is kind of clumpy. You know there's something that's just. There's something wrong about that. Not because they're going bald. Because we all know that bald is beautiful. Let's just be clear about that.
- But there's something that is wrong about that. There's something dehumanizing in some sense. It's taking the beauty that ought to be there. And it's pulling it away.
- [5 : 24] And there's a tragedy to it. Stumptown. There's a lifeless quality. When I was a junior in college. I was taking this class on medieval history.
- And I was taking it with one of my good friends named Rob. And it was towards the end of the semester. About this time in the semester. And I was working on an end of the semester paper. And we had this reading to do.
- And I was so far behind. And Rob and I lived together. And so he was like. Well here. Take a look at my paper. You can see what I did. And so I took some of that. And I kind of let some of his ideas shape what I was doing.
- I didn't just copy it outright. But it was pretty heavily influenced. And sure enough. On about Wednesday. I got a call from my professor. Hey why don't you come in. We're going to talk about something. And my professor had our two papers out.
- And it must have been clear that mine was the lower quality. Derivative version of Rob's paper. Because he was not calling Rob.
- [6 : 22] He was calling me. And he was walking through. And we had a conversation about plagiarism. And about how I was taking these ideas.
- I had not like just stolen everything. But it was borderline. And thankfully because it was a borderline case. I did not get in any trouble. I just got a stern warning.
- But that was quite enough for me. Because I learned my lesson. I no longer wanted to sit in a room. In front of somebody. That was showing me all of my sin.
- Who was saying. Who was revealing for me. The weak. And vulnerable. And lifeless state that I was in. Because he was essentially saying. I know you were lazy.

I know you were behind. I know you didn't do your work. I know you didn't do your responsibilities. And you took the easy way out. And everybody can see it. All of us have had moments like this.

[7 : 22] Whether it's our parents telling us this. Or some teacher. Or a boss. Or a policeman. Somebody who is at that moment. Exposes us for who we are.

I felt lifeless. I felt like there was something. About my external world. That reflected the lifelessness of my internal world. I was a stump.

In that moment. There was something stumpy. About my spiritual. State. That is exactly the image.

That Isaiah wants you to see. And that he's describing. About Israel and their spiritual condition. Israel was stump town. Isaiah.

Isaiah. When he was coming along. Isaiah is writing at about 700 BC. And he's coming along at kind of the tail end. The twilight. Of the best times in Israel.

[8 : 18] Things had been relatively good. For a few hundred years. They'd been relatively prosperous. Relatively free from conflict. They'd had a society that had gone. That was flourishing in a lot of ways.

But Isaiah was coming out. And remember. Isaiah sees. He's a prophet. He sees what is actually happening. The spiritual realities. And what Isaiah is saying is.

It may look okay to you on the outside. But there is a spiritual rot at the core. You guys are actually a stump town. And it's going to get bad.

God is going to judge. That's Isaiah's message. The land was. When you scratched under the surface. The land was full of injustice. Their lives were full of sexual and relational sin.

Their worship was false. It was perfunctory and externalized. It didn't have anything to do with their hearts. In Isaiah's message.

[9 : 17] That was that judgment was coming. We can say it this way. The inflation of Israel's own sense of pride. They had. Their human pride.

They thought they had figured things out. They thought that they had their own self salvation. They thought that they knew the way that things should go. And that had created a situation where they were about to fall.

In fact. If you had Bibles. The two verses that immediately precede our passage. The end of chapter 10. Say this. It says this. Behold.

The Lord God of hosts. Will lop off the bows. Like the tops of trees. With terrifying power. The great in height will be hewn down.

And the lofty will be brought low. He will cut down the thickets of the forests. With an axe. God's judgment was going to come.

[10 : 13] And it was going to look like the majestic forest. Being cut down. Leaving only stumps. Judah was going to be a stump town. You know.

I think this image of spiritual stumps is really important. And one that we need to sit with in the Advent season. You know. The season of Advent is the season where we long for Christ's coming.

This actually is one of the traditional passages that we read at this time of year. This doesn't sound very Christmassy. How did this passage make the Messiah, you know, chorus? How did it.

How did it. How is this the passage that provides hope? Because this passage gets us back to real life. You see. If you can pull your attention away from the glitzy commercials.

And all the glittery Christmas stuff. And the incessant music in every restaurant you go into. Most people feel a sense of lifelessness all around them.

[11 : 11] You know. Most people. When they get honest. They feel lonely. They feel especially depressed at this time of year. They feel their addictions.

They're struggling with their pride. They're struggling with their greed. They're dealing with indwelling sin patterns.

They feel weak because of their physical ailments. They feel powerless in the face of their relational difficulties. It's not just that the sun goes down early. And it's a little bit depressing in the evenings.

It's that that depressive feeling sits over everybody. You can go to good parties. But you still feel it. And the problem isn't just with the people out there.

The problem of national politics. Or what you read in the news. Or whatever. The problem is in here. It's in our own souls. It's in our families. It's in this room right now. I quoted this writer that I love.

[12 : 15] Her name is Tish Warren. Last week. And I wanted to read the quote I read last week. But read a little bit longer section. Just to give you a little context. I love this quote. It's from an article she wrote in the New York Times recently.

She says this. To practice Advent is to lean into an almost cosmic ache. A cosmic ache. Our deep, wordless desire for things to be made right.

And the incompleteness we find in the meantime. We dwell in a world still wracked with conflict, violence, suffering, and darkness. Advent holds space for our grief.

And it reminds us that all of us, in one way or another, are not only wounded by the evil in this world. But are also the wielders of it.

Contributing our own moments of unkindness or impatience or selfishness or worse. Man.

[13 : 17] That ache. That ache. That cosmic ache. You know, you and I need to be reminded that we are residents of Stumptown.

And occasionally we act like the mayor of Stumptown. At least I do. But from out of the stump will grow a shoot.

A new branch is going to come out of the roots. A new life. There's a Savior. And that's what's so beautiful about this passage. Eugene Peterson talks about this passage and he says this.

We worship the God of the holy stump. The God of the holy stump. See, Isaiah in this passage is wanting you to see that God actually has a plan for entering into the brokenness.

And meeting that need with himself. With his own power. Doing something that only he could do. Bringing life out of death. Now, when the people of Isaiah's day originally read this, they didn't necessarily think of it as the Messiah.

[14 : 24] They thought it perhaps could be the Messiah. But it could perhaps be a king in their own day. Hezekiah was a pretty good king that came not long after this. Zerubbabel would be a king later on.

And so they saw partial fulfillments. But when the New Testament writers came to this passage, they were like, there. That's the Messiah. That's Jesus. And so we look back on this passage and see Jesus there.

But it also points us forward to the day when Jesus will return. The day between his first advent, his first coming, and his second advent, his second coming.

That's where we live. And so this passage is very, very practical and hopeful for us. So I just want to walk briefly through it and then make some application points.

So we'll start here. It's interesting that Isaiah describes the coming of the Messiah as the root of Jesse. Look at this. Then look at verse 10, the very end.

[15 : 38] If I can flip over there. In that day, the root of Jesse. Who was Jesse? Anybody remember this from their Bible stories? It was David's father, right? David's father was Jesse.

David was the youngest son. So what does this say? Normally, when we think about kings, Isaiah is saying a king is coming. Normally, when we think about this, we think about some descendant of David who would be like great David.

But Isaiah is saying, no, no, no. It's not one of David. It's one of Jesse. It's a different line. A different king. He's saying he's not going to be a king like David.

He's going to be a king instead of David. He's going to replace David's kingdom rule with his own rule that would be perfect and good and right.

Why is that important? Well, it's because what the people of Israel wanted was a kingdom that would come, a salvation that would fit their expectations.

[16 : 42] They wanted something that looked like what they'd had before. That sounded like the king of David. That would fit into their Israel expectations. And what Isaiah is saying is, no, there is going to be a king, but he's going to be different.

Okay? So he's a king. That's the first thing. Second thing is, he's going to be a good king. Look at the character of how he's described. Let me read verses 2 to 5.

And the spirit of the Lord will rest upon him. Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. What is his delight in?

In the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide disputes by what his ears hear. He's not just judging by sight, but he's judging with righteousness.

He'll judge the poor with equity for the meek. He'll strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he'll kill the wicked. Righteousness will be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt at his knees.

[17 : 46] I mean, he's such a distinctive king. Wise and righteous and good and victorious. Wouldn't we like a leader like this? You know?

We don't see any human leaders who are like this. He's not the normal leader. Here's what's really cool is there's actually a word play going on here.

There's this cool word in Hebrew. You don't need to be like a Bible scholar to get this. Ruach. Ruach is this word. You can say it. Ruach. It's a cool word.

You've got to kind of have the guttural thing going. And it means three different things in Hebrew. It means breath. Like in Genesis 1 it says God breathed the breath of life into Adam.

Ruach. But it also means wind. The wind of God blowing. Ruach. It also means spirit. The spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

[18 : 47] Same word. Ruach. And so that's coming up here in this passage. The spirit. The Ruach of God rests upon him. And then look down in verse 4.

The end of verse 4. He'll strike the earth with the rod of his mouth. With his breath. With the breath of his lips. He'll slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist.

Faithfulness his belt. His. What does that mean? What that means is that he is a king. Who not only is good in his character. But the way that he is ruling.

Is in the power of God's spirit. And his weapons are not the weapons of human violence. That he's using. He's using the weapon of the spirit.

The weapons of righteousness. The weapons of faithfulness. He's using goodness. To destroy the powers of sin.

- [19 : 46] And death. And evil in the world. That's pretty interesting. Because I think. That most people. When they think of God's kingdom coming. And the kind of rule they want.
- Is. They want to win. We need to win. And it almost doesn't matter how we do it. But Jesus is saying.
- Or Isaiah is saying. That the Messiah will come. And he will win. But he will win in righteousness. A far more powerful weapon. Okay.
- So he's a king. He's a good king. And he's a good king. That's going to bring complete restoration. You may have recognized. Verses 6 to 9.
- They're engraved. In like public spaces. All over the world. Because people love the image of this. Which is ironic. Because those places. Don't actually have the power.
- [20 : 41] To bring it to fruition. Let me read it. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb. The leopard shall lie down. With the young goat. This is kind of Eden language. Right? This is creation language.
- The calf. And the lion. And the fattened calf together. A little child shall lead them. Cow and the bear shall graze. The young shall lie down together. The lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- A nursing child shall play over the hole of a cobra. None of you moms would like that. And the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt. Or destroy in all my holy mountain.
- Erigh? So. Then. In the woods. The lions. And as weaned.
- That's the vision. There's a presence of Moyadiator. The women. There are so many people. That's like going back to the garden. But there's more to it than that. One of the things that is significant.
- [21 : 40] Is the double repetition of snakes here. And humans and snakes. Children and snakes interacting. Most commentators think that Isaiah is hearkening back to Genesis chapter 3, the passage that James read for us just a few minutes ago.
- You remember in that passage, Adam and Eve, they've sinned, and so God is confronting them in their sin, and He curses them.
- He curses the ground. The ground is not going to be good for food. And childbirth, it's going to be hard. And He says, And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between the serpent and the woman, and between their seeds.
- And there will be a battle between them. And theologians for years have said that that is the first proclamation of the gospel. The first proclamation of God's truth right there.
- The first prediction of Jesus is in that moment in Genesis 3. The third page of the Bible, it's predicting that there was someone is going to have to come who would battle and defeat the serpent.
- [22 : 45] That the enmity, the hatred that is endemic in our world would somehow have to be healed by one. And this passage is picturing that.
- That there's an enmity that exists in the fabric of the created world. And what this passage is saying is that when God comes into the world through His Messiah, He is going to change the very fabric of the way that the world works.
- You know, we can say it this way. The end of the world is not going to be with all of us sitting in heaven on fluffy clouds playing harps.
- That the end of this world is a recreated, creational world that works the way that it ought to work. That there's not this destructiveness at the very core of the world.
- And that God, the good King, is coming for a complete restoration. Okay. What do we do with that? What do we do with that?

[23 : 50] Well, I think this passage is really hopeful because it sketches the end of a story which we could not have seen coming. The people in Isaiah's day couldn't have seen coming.

The New Testament writers couldn't have totally seen this coming. And we can't yet see what this is totally going to be. But it helps us live lives that even in the midst of our lives that feel like stumps, new life is going to be born.

That there is hope in the midst of this. Even if the challenges that you are facing feel overwhelming right now.

Whether it's an issue with sin. An issue with broken relationships. An issue with health. An issue in your community.

That there is hope in this. Now, let's be honest. You may be like Israel. It may get worse before it gets better. But there is hope in the midst of that.

[24 : 57] How do we do this? Well, I think you need to have... There are three things you need to hear about this. Okay? Here's the first one. First one is this. You need to hear that you can't fix your situation by yourself.

Isaiah is saying to the people of Israel, this can't just be fixed by you. There has to be someone outside of you that comes in. You know, a new discipleship technique.

A new experience in the world. A new husband. A new job. Moving to a new city. None of those things can fix all of your problems.

You need Jesus to do that. Natalie and I watched that movie, Eat, Pray, Love, the other day. It's terrible. And because what it's saying is, is that basically all you need is you need a new self-actualization plan.

Christianity is not Eat, Pray, Love. Christianity is I can't do anything to bring substantive change to this world and to my own soul. I must have someone who can.

[26 : 11] Someone on my behalf who can bring change. And the only person who can is Jesus. And He's the one who we have been promised has come and will come again.

And there's hope there. You see, that shouldn't bring despair to you. For some people, you've been trying really hard for a long time to fix stuff.

You've been desperately trying. And it hasn't worked yet. And it's not going to work. And that can feel despairing. Here's the great thing. What I think Isaiah is saying to you is, you can take a deep breath.

I can't fix this. I'm just like every other person in the world. I can't fix my life. And I must have Jesus to do it. You know, there is a certain spiritual pride that goes along with this.

There's a certain spiritual pride that says, if I really get going, I can fix things. And Isaiah is saying, no, you can't. Only Jesus can fix you.

[27 : 20] Take a step back. And rest in your neediness. Rest in your inability. Stop.

Look at the stumps around you. And turn to the only one who can. So that's the second thing. First thing is, see that you can't fix it. Second thing is, start repenting.

Repent of your spiritual pride. Repent of your trying to do things so well that you wouldn't have to repent anymore.

Repent of the ways that you have been trying to prop up your life. Repent of the ways that you've been trying to get this stump to regrow. Repent of all the ways that you have refused to throw yourself fully on Christ.

As He's offered to you. Stop. And then turn. This is the third thing. Turn in faith. Turn in faith to Him again.

[28 : 26] Because if you do, what you'll be able to do is you'll begin to look around. You'll begin to see that He's the one who can bring new life. He's the one who can bring you a new hope.

You can begin to look for light dawning. You know, that's the whole deal with Advent. Advent, if you're at real liturgical churches, they have all this dark stuff happening.

You know, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, this minor key. You know, it's depressing a little bit and slow. And I think that's really good for us. But as you move closer and closer towards Christmas, you see more and more light dawning.

It's as though the sun is coming up and showing you what is really there for the first time. I don't know if you've seen this movie. I think it's called A Walk in the Clouds.

Keanu Reeves. I normally don't care for Keanu Reeves movies because he's, you know, always an FBI agent. And with terrible accents and, you know.

[29 : 28] Anyway. But he's in this romantic comedy called A Walk in the Clouds. It came out in the 90s. And it's about Keanu Reeves. He's like a traveling salesman. He meets this woman. And her father owns this big vineyard in Napa Valley.

And so Keanu Reeves goes with the girl. And they go and visit the family. And they're at this beautiful vineyard. And for whatever reason, the father dislikes Keanu Reeves' character. He doesn't think they're a good match for his daughter.

And so one night after they've had a lot of wine, they've had too much wine. And the father is drunk. And he gets angry at Keanu Reeves' character. And he takes this lantern and he swings at him.

And he misses. And the lantern goes out and it breaks. And it hits part of the vine of the vineyard. And of course you know that the wine vines are dry and brittle.

And so it goes up in flames. And it starts to... It burns the whole vineyard. And so they come out in the morning. And this family is just...

[30 : 33] They are devastated. Hello kids. They're devastated by the loss of this vineyard. Until they realize that the tap root, the root from which the entire vine was built, was set off in its own place.

A little bit away. And they went to it and they found it. It was charred. But as they pulled back the char, there was something green in the middle of it. There was life that was in there.

There was life in this vine. And this vine would be rebuilt. And I think there's something beautiful about that. Because what that means is that it is okay to look at the lifelessness of sin and death in our lives.

But at the same time, we have to make the turn and see that out of the stump, God is going to bring new life. Not because of you. Not because of your goodness or your ability.

But because of Him. Because of His worthiness. Because of His goodness. Because He's a good King who is bringing about a complete redemption.

[31 : 45] That's what Jesus does. That's why this season is so important for you to look to Him. Because you'll find life with Him.

Okay. Let me pray for us. Our Father, we pray that You would help us to see Jesus more today. And we pray it in His name. Amen. Amen.