

Second Sunday of Advent 2024

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[0 : 01] We continue on in our Advent series. We are spending Advent in Isaiah's prophecy. Last week we looked at chapter 2, and with it, that beautiful declaration that at the end of the age, swords will be beaten into plowshares, spears will be beaten into pruning hooks.

It's this wonderful picture of the reign of Christ and his judgment on the living and the dead, ushering in this remarkable, wonderful, eternal reality.

Today we're in Isaiah 11, and we're going to look at this mysterious prophecy. It doesn't necessarily seem mysterious for us. Here we are recognizing that this is going to be about Jesus.

Nevertheless, let us put ourselves into the boots, the sandals, the shoes, whatever, of the ancient Israelites centuries and centuries before Christ showed up on the scene 2,000 years ago.

And what we're going to read here is about a king. And this king is a remarkable king. He is a king that comes from David's line. And if you are familiar at all with the biblical story, you'll know that King David wasn't just a king of Israel, but he was the king of Israel. In fact, he was the most high and lifted up king of Israel.

[1 : 26] And this prophecy says that a king like David would come again. So we're going to take a look at this king. We're going to ask the question, who is this king?

And we're going to ask the question, what is the nature of his rule? And finally, we're going to ask the question, how will his reign affect the world? So kings do. They reign. And as a result, their kingdoms look a certain way.

So if you have a Bible, you can turn with me. Isaiah chapter 11, starting in the first verse. There is only one more Bible left, but if you want to grab it before anybody else does, go for it.

But it would be great if you could follow along with me. Look at verse 1 of Isaiah chapter 11. This is what it says. Again, we're asking the question, who is this king?

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. Chapter 11 opens with the image of a clear-cut forest.

[2 : 32] If you go back to chapter 10, it's a very grim picture that is painted of an arrogant, a rebellious people who are, in God's judgment, lopped off.

It's for sure referring to the people of Israel, but also to the neighboring superpower at the time, the Assyrians. And what we see here in chapter 11, and we can picture it in our minds, the picture is a clear-cut forest.

I actually like the imagery, and I'm not trying to impose my own stuff, but just it helps me here, of thinking about post-wildfires in Jasper. If you remember this earlier this year, I mean, it looked like a hellscape.

It was a terrible thing. Jasper burnt to the ground. Or if it helps you, a clear-cut forest, but in a not sustainable way, just completely, a forest completely torn up.

And out of this utter destruction that is the cause of judgment because of rebellion and arrogance, out shoots this one tiny green sapling out of this big, lopped off stump.

[3 : 52] And if you can picture the Jasper imagery with me, I like it because it's like all grayscale, right? All the ash. There's not much even color. There's nothing.

But you can picture complete gray, ash, black, and out of it shoots this bright, vibrant sapling. And friends, right off the bat, Isaiah chapter 11 speaks of the Lord's mercy and of His grace and of God's inability to allow arrogance and rebellion to endure forever.

This sapling, this shoot that's going to come from the stump of Jesse, we will see that it is a king. But it's significant that Jesse here is mentioned because Jesse, if you know the story of King David's line, he is the father of King David.

He is the beginning of the Divinic dynasty, so to speak. So even though it mentions Jesse here, what we are understanding is that a second David is about to come onto the scene.

A David 2.0, if you will. King David is returning. Now, King David, he lived centuries before this. All the kings that came from King David, some were good, some were horrendous, none were perfect.

[5 : 25] Here we're going to see that this king, who will come as the shoot out of the stump of Jesse, out of this act of grace and mercy from the rebellious and arrogant people Israel that have suffered judgment because of their actions.

This king will not be like any other king that Israel has ever known. He is not simply a great king, but he is the king. If David is his father, this king is something like David, but even more so.

There's a bit of a mystery surrounding who this king is. Like I mentioned before, the imagery is of the mercy and grace of God, his love expressed in redemption.

It starts small. It is insignificant, but will grow bigger and grander. And here's the wonderful thing about what we see here, is that it is this little sapling, this king, it is an expression of the grace and mercy of God, not because God has somehow acquired excellent skills of grace and mercy, but because God himself is mercy and grace.

What do I mean by that? We are a collection of our attributes, so to speak. We are complex people.

[6 : 57] We can learn and grow and acquire different skills and abilities. Nobody here was born with the ability to read, to do math.

Nobody here was born with the ability to love perfectly well. And yet, we've acquired it. God is not so. God has always existed in his perfection, which is to say that when we read that God is love, we can also say that God is mercy and God is grace.

God is justice. That he isn't, he isn't merely a composite of his qualities, but he is. Therefore, his qualities are inherent to him.

They are essential. There's a whole doctrine around this. I think it's wonderful and exciting. I also know that it can get, it can, it can cause people to fall asleep prematurely.

But I'll just mention the name. It is the, God's simplicity. It's divine simplicity. And this is significant for us because what is happening isn't just that God went into a season of judgment against Israel and thought, I was a bit too heavy-handed.

[8 : 17] I was a bit too harsh. What I'm going to do is I'm going to give them a bit of mercy. I'm going to throw them a bone. I'm going to show them some grace. I don't want them to think of me as too mean.

I want to show my love. I've made a mistake. I need to correct it. It's not like that at all. But what we see here is something that God cannot not do.

He cannot not show mercy. He cannot not show grace. He cannot not show love. He has to. So when we see this destruction, this judgment that has happened, not because he is this vindictive God, but because rebellion and arrogance can only last so long before God's judgment has to deal with it, what we are seeing here is God being God and proclaiming mercy and grace and love to people that do not deserve it.

And this is what this little sapling, this green, bright, vivid shoot that's shooting out of this lopped-off stump, this is what it means. This is who this king is.

He's an expression of God's grace and mercy. Later on, at the end of Isaiah, close to the end of Isaiah, Isaiah 65, 24 says this, just to highlight how merciful and gracious this God is and how quick he is to rush towards redemption.

[9 : 44] Isaiah 65, 24 says this, Before they call, I will answer. While they are yet speaking, I will hear. It's a beautiful picture of what God does and who God is.

There's a prayer also that we prayed, I guess it would be sometime this summer, it's smack dab in Trinity season and we were previously just in Trinity season. It's from the colleague for the 12th Sunday in Trinity and it reads this, Almighty and everlasting God who is always more ready to hear than we are to pray.

That's a beautiful line. He is always more ready to hear than we are to pray and is always more ready to give more than we desire or deserve and then it continues on praying for God's mercy.

This shoot, this little bit that is Jesse's offspring is just that and like I mentioned before, it is a king, it is going to be a king like David, this king, this shoot that this king is represented in, it's going to be like David but also not like David.

What do I mean? And this is where we're going to continue on, verse 2. This is what it says of this shoot, this king that is to come. Verse 2, And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

[11:12] Verse 3, and I'll just read the first part of verse 3. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. King David was an anointed king and he certainly did delight in the law and the fear of the Lord.

Psalms 119 is a beautiful psalm that highlights that. It'll take you about 25 or so minutes to read. And I know this because I was driving with Steve Griffin who you will know, he's guest preached here a number of times.

We were driving to Pembroke and as soon as we hit the highway at Palladium, he said, I want you, I'm going to be preaching on Psalm 119. Would you read it for me?

I was like, yeah, yeah, yeah, sure. Which verse? He's like, go ahead, just read the whole thing. And when I put up my head, we were an arm prior. So it's about like 25, 30 minutes to read it. What's unmistakable about Psalm 119 and King David wrote it is that he was delighting in the Lord.

Delighting in his laws, delighting in his ways. This was King David. He loved the Lord. However, David sinned in no small way. He was an adulterer.

[12:21] He was a liar. He was a murderer. He wasn't exactly a great father either. As great as David was, this offspring of Jesse, this David 2.0, is something far better and greater.

It is remarkable these seven-fold spirits of the Lord that will rest upon him. David 2.0, empowered by the Spirit of God himself so that he is a king who is wise and just in all his decisions and pronouncements.

So that means he's not a liar. And it's not that he just doesn't lie very much. It means that he's not a liar. Truth, and only truth, is spoken from his lips.

He doesn't fudge numbers. He doesn't reframe the narrative to fit him or his agenda. He is marked by honesty and truth.

That's that first part. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Also, the Spirit of counsel and might. That is to say that this king is going to be strong and strategic.

[13:30] He has the ability to right the ills of the enemies of his people. We'll see who those enemies are a bit later.

He is plotting the right course of action and also has a skill in the endurance to see it through. This king, he is not all talk, but he is brawn.

He has strength, but also there's a wisdom and a strategy about him. This last part, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. This king, he knows and loves the Lord.

He deeply delights in the Lord. He takes truth and rightly applies it. He is reverent and obedient, giving glory to God Almighty.

This is what true, divine loyalty looks like in this king. He is about God's business first and foremost. And finally, the first part of verse 3 says, and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

[14:38] I mean, it's really wonderful we have these really good translations, but it doesn't really catch it. What we hear in the original language would be something like all of his delight, all of his being, everything about him just finds its fullness and delight in God Almighty.

There's just a singular focus, all of his delight. The language also speaks of enjoying the Lord's fragrance. It's like a deeply personal relationship that this king has with God himself.

So, this is the king that shoots from the stump of Jesse. This is the king that God is promising to his wayward people. So, we consider again verse 1 and you see this clear-cut forest or this absolutely charred hellscape.

This shoot, bright, vibrant, full of life, this shoot springs up in the midst of destruction. And this isn't just a bone that's being thrown to a wayward people.

This is God's goodness and love and mercy on full display. It's a beautiful picture. This is who this king is. This is the heart of the Lord for his people who certainly do not deserve it.

[15:59] So, it's very clear that verses 2 and in the first part of verse 3, the king is marked inwardly by godly character. He's empowered by the Holy Spirit. He is delighting in the Lord.

And this manifests itself outwardly in a commitment to righteousness as a good and godly judge who establishes good and godly rule and leads God's people in good and godly living.

And this will be our second point. What is the nature of his rule? Look with me. The second part of verse 3 all the way to verse 5. And this is what it says. 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 he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt of his loins. No hypocrisy with this king. Only a deep consistent and truly righteous life.

[17:06] His inward his interior life matches his outer life his outward life. And in a world that is deeply conflicted and incoherent whether it be leaders or institutions or policies or world views whatever may be education you name it the promise of this kind of rule and this kind of king it is a deeply comforting thing.

A righteous living consistent godly king who will rule perfectly. Only he can judge with true equity not the appearance of equity.

He does not favor the wealthy because he is easily influenced nor does he take up the cause of the poor overlooking their sin their unrighteousness.

Rather he is about what is right and just and fair. There is no confusion there is no hesitation in this king. He is committed to righteousness in all the spheres of his rule which turns out to be the entire earth.

This is not King David this is something greater than King David someone greater than King David. A king a leader a ruler who is consistently good.

[18:24] this fall has been an interesting one. You don't have to be a news junkie to know that there was a significant election in America. With the election of Donald Trump I mean the narrative that that he will only he would only get elected because of misogyny and racism was blown out of the water.

Like him or not the election of Donald Trump was in no small part due to a rejection of progressivism. And yet just a few weeks later in the British Parliament in the House assisted suicide was adopted as the law of the land.

Extremely progressive. Glenn Scribner we read one of his books this summer *The Air We Breathe* he commented on our current cultural moment and I think it's brilliant. He says it is marked by the mask terrors and the mask wearers.

And I think it's very it fits very well. We live in a confused time. We have people that have conflicting world views and on one hand it seems like progressivism is dead but on the other hand progressivism is alive and well that conservative values they're coming back with force conservative values are being absolutely relegated to the margins.

It's a very bizarre time a bit of an incoherent time that's not even to talk about the influx of immigration and the politics and the world views that are brought with new Canadians or refugees it's a remarkable it's a remarkable world we live in.

[20:09] It's difficult to navigate at times but here there's a promise that there will be a king who will proclaim what is truly right and it will be based not on the current fad of the day but on timeless and eternal truths of who God is and what he established and him calling his creation good and proclaiming human flourishing on his terms not ours and that he will be consistent completely and a big part of this we'll find out will be reconciling humanity with God once again.

The rule of the king however envisions a truly just society that promotes what is truly good but also punishes what is truly bad. So although it is a beautiful marriage of mercy and justice it says of this king that he will he will judge the wicked and he will kill them.

It's a bit of a jarring thing for us to read. But I'll just say this. There can't be a promotion of the good of virtue unless evil and vice vices are dealt with.

It is not enough to overlook the bad in the pursuit of the good but the bad must be dealt with. And I think this is precisely what is happening. The judgment of God is not a mean thing but also an expression of his love.

I want to save the dignity of my children so I won't name which one but one of the ways we at least I frame discipline in our house is that their life is like a beautiful garden and we want to see vegetables and flowers grow but what happens is that little weeds shoot up or rodents get in there and eat the bulbs or eat the vegetables before they're ready to be harvested.

[22 : 22] There's like a whole kind of thing we go through. But that discipline is like pulling out the weeds. it's like attacking and destroying all the, sorry, getting the rodents in live traps and then letting them out in a wooded area for them to live lovely lives.

Probably the former. But that's what we say to our kids because if we truly love them we want to judge their behavior to be wanting.

That is a loving thing to do and what we see here is precisely that. That God through this king wants to cultivate true flourishing. He wants to see life grow and spring up and develop and that cannot happen if evil is allowed to persist.

So this king will be a king marked by proclaiming and exacting judgment but it will not be done in a vindictive way but in a just and good way.

So we've found out who the king is we've understood what his the nature of his rule but now we ask the question how will this rule how will this reign affect the world?

[23 : 46] We judge a tree by its fruit so what will the fruit of this king look like? Verses six to nine read with me. 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 fat and calf together and the little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together and the lion shall eat straw like 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.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. I'll read verse nine one last time.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 2 verse 4 swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks.

It is an agricultural metaphor. We have something similar here in verses six to nine. Something that harkens back to Eden.

[25 : 02] Something I don't know why I wasn't as familiar with this. I've read the creation account a number of times. Maybe it's familiar to you, maybe not. But Genesis 1, 29 to 30, God has created everything.

He has given dominion over all of the earth to mankind, to Adam. But verses 30 of Genesis chapter 1 says this, And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life.

So it's everything. I have given every green plant for food. And it was so. It would seem that the way God created the world meant that even creation was at peace and not at war with each other.

That there was such peace that it extended well past humanity but into every aspect of the created order. And I think that's what it's getting at here. I think we could get lost and maybe it would be a great study but we'd get lost if we say well listen, you know, this is just a literal thing that we need to, we can only read Genesis 1 literally and I think we should read it in some cases literally.

But I think it speaks to something greater than that. That the peace of God was always the plan of creation. The curse that came into the world because of rebellious sin, it seems like it will be no more when this king comes in the world that he will reign.

[26 : 38] Peace will be known. Creation no more given to frustration and brokenness. So this true vision of a biblical peace is, I've heard it said before, it's not just the absence of war but the righting of all wrongs, the reconciliation of all hostilities and what it truly means to live to the fullest.

The peace will be marked with tranquility and holiness. And how will that come to pass? We'll see this again in verse 9. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

That's it. This is the key section in this, in verses 6 to 9 and maybe even the entire section of chapter 11. So once again, we see that the mercy and grace of a loving God is making it possible for true peace to exist between us and him.

And then it continues to flow out. It continues to reach and go into every crack and crevice of all of creation so that even the most elusive peace is realized.

This is all because the world comes under the rule of this king, this offspring of David. It is hard for us to in a very liberty is kind of freedom.

[28 : 05] It's one of our it's one of the things we value the most. That I am my own person. I have autonomy. I have independence. And here, interestingly, there's a great irony because it is saying as the world comes into subjection to the king, that true life begins.

True life doesn't begin when we start to exercise our autonomy in every aspect of our life, but only as we bend a knee to this king and be reconciled to the God of creation will we truly understand what it means to be human and enjoy it.

It's a remarkable thing. But let's go back to this picture of this king. This king is supposed to be like David. This king clearly is not David.

He is better than David. He is better than any human that has ever existed. Again, we're wearing and we're putting ourselves in the shoes of the Israelites that are reading this centuries before Jesus comes on the scene.

Who on earth, who on earth could satisfy this prophecy? Clearly it wasn't a human being. Or maybe it was and this person was kind of given a dose of the divinity in some kind of way.

[29 : 24] Who knows? But there's some mystery around this. This isn't a regular person. This is where it gets really wonderful. Verse 10, it reads like this. In that day, if you remember last week we talked about this term in that day being shorthand for the end of the age, this messianic age when God would send his savior to right all the wrong.

So it's a little shorthand here. Verse 10. 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.

Verse 1, it speaks about the shoot of Jesse. Out of Jesse, another offspring of Jesse, a shoot of Jesse, a shoot out of the stump will appear.

But here, it doesn't say the shoot of Jesse, it says the root of Jesse. So what's happening? It would seem that the shoot of Jesse is also the root of Jesse here.

And that means that the offspring of Jesse, this David 2.0, is actually the creator of the Davidic line himself. That this king isn't just an offspring, but the creator himself.

[30 : 38] This person has to be God. You don't speak of human beings in this language. He is the root of Jesse. He has come again to his people, even though they are obstinate.

God himself is the Messiah. It is a remarkable thing. It's subtle, but you see it here. And for the ancient Israelites reading this, there would have to be a scandal in their ears to hear this.

That somehow this Messiah, this promised king would be God himself. There's no chance. There's no way. Here's the beautiful thing about this. God has not recalled his promises to obstinate Israel. He has promised to be their God and they his people. But here we see that instead of extending his mercy and grace just to Israel, he extends it to the entire world.

For it says that he will be a signal for all peoples. That God has breached the divide between him in his holiness and glory and us in our sinfulness and rebellion.

[31 : 46] In our cursed state. That God has set up a banner. He has declared it. He is proclaiming it to the entire world. Because the root of Jesse becomes the shoot of Jesse.

God becomes man yet remains God. So we see this thing that is very, it's very mysterious but also very scandalous but it also is very exciting if we grasp what's really happening.

For the king of the universe becomes a king in David's line and he reverses the curse by paying our debt upon the cross of Calvary. And in doing so he restores us to him so that we may know and enjoy the Lord's goodness and peace forever and then we become his ambassadors to the nations. We become a part of that signal, that banner, proclaiming that we are in the messianic age. That the king has come. He has come. He has come in the form of human flesh, fully man, fully God and he will come again to consolidate his rule.

This is why the incarnation of our Lord is an incredible act of mercy and grace. So as we continue on in Advent, help us, we need to ask the Lord to help us to prepare for his coming.

[33 : 09] Prepare for our long awaited king, the shoot and the root of Jesse. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for these centuries, millennia old prophecies that weren't just declared and became just a relic of the past.

Just an archaeological bit of evidence for how ancient Israelites used to live, but a prophecy that came true. Lord, you have declared something and it has come to pass.

So let us prepare, Lord, that we would be ready to receive the blessed Savior on Christmas Day. But Lord, help us also to live now in the reality that will come in its fullness when he returns a second time. Lord, we thank you that you don't treat us the way we ought to be treated.

Instead, you give us mercy and grace and love abundantly in a way that is not cheap, is not little bits, but it is poured out.

[34 : 20] We thank you for this. We pray all this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.