

A rod from the stem of Jesse

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 00] For a short while this evening, I'd like us to turn back to the chapter that we read in Isaiah chapter 11.

And we can read again the first couple of verses. And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

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.

Now, we often hear and we often use the phrase, I have got good news and I've got bad news.

That's something that I'm sure we hear regularly.

It's something that I'm sure we say regularly. There's good news and there's bad news. Maybe, for example, you might take your car into the garage and you go back after a few hours or the next day.

[1 : 18] And the mechanic might say to you, I've got good news and bad news. Good news is, I've found what's wrong with your car. Bad news is, it's going to cost 500 pounds.

Very often, good news will come with bad news. Particularly relevant to tonight, there's good news that END is preaching tonight. Bad news is, it's in Barvis.

And you've got me here instead. Good news and bad news often go together. But this idea of good news and bad news is something that's very, very important to have in our minds when we are reading the Old Testament prophets.

Because the prophets in the Old Testament, like Isaiah and all the other ones, were people who brought good news and bad news. They had a two-fold message.

On the one hand, they had a bad news message. A message of judgment. And on the other hand, they had a good news message. A message of salvation.

[2 : 29] So when you read through Isaiah or any of the other prophets, it's really helpful to have this in mind. Because they are saying two things. They are saying there is bad news.

God's judgment is coming. But there is good news. God will also provide salvation.

And so this two-fold message, judgment and salvation, is really the framework for understanding the Old Testament prophets. And it's very helpful to think like that. Because sometimes you can read some of the prophets, and they can seem to be, in many ways, quite negative and almost quite harsh.

And it can seem like there is a lot of bad news. And rightly so. They had a message of judgment. But alongside that, they always present a message of salvation as well.

It's good news. And bad news. Now, as I said, Isaiah is one of the prophets who has this two-fold message. And the book of Isaiah contains many amazing passages.

[3 : 38] It has so much wonderful teaching, and there are so many great sections of this book that we could look at. And one of those amazing passages is chapter 11.

And so I want us just to spend a wee while tonight looking at Isaiah 11. And as we look at it, we have to keep this idea of good news and bad news in our minds.

Isaiah is presenting a message of judgment and a message of salvation. So we start with the bad news.

Isaiah has a message of judgment. Chapter 11 is part of a section in the book that's made up of chapter 7 through to 12.

These chapters all go together as one section. And the main theme of that section from chapter 7 to chapter 12 is that God is talking about judging the nations.

[4 : 40] He's going to judge Israel. He's going to judge Judah. And he's going to judge the surrounding nations around them. That's the dominant theme of this section, if you read through all of these chapters.

And if we just remind ourselves of the historical background, this is all happening about 700 years before Jesus was born. So we're about 700, 720, 730 BC, around that period. And by this time, Israel had split into two. If you remember, Israel was one nation. But then after Solomon died, they split into two. The northern section was bigger. It had ten tribes in it. And it was generally called Israel. And the southern section just had two tribes in it. And it was called Judah. And so these two had split after Solomon had died. And they were still split by the time of Isaiah chapter 11. And by this point, they were enemies with each other. They didn't like each other.

[5 : 47] It's a bit like if you imagine that, say, there was a yes vote in the referendum in September. And Scotland and England did break in two. And then in a few years, started fighting each other. That's what's happening here.

The country had split. And now they were enemies with one another. And this is referred to in this chapter in verse 13. It says, the envy of Ephraim shall depart. Now, when it says Ephraim, that's referring to the northern kingdom. Because Ephraim was one of the tribes. It was the biggest tribe in the northern kingdom. So, the northern kingdom was generally called Israel. But sometimes it was referred to as Ephraim. Because it was the main tribe there. So, when it says Ephraim, it means the northern kingdom. The envy of Ephraim shall depart. And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah. And Judah shall not vex Ephraim. Now, this is referring to a future situation where the current problems of envy and strife are no longer applied.

[6 : 48] Because at the moment, they are fighting against one another. But they weren't just fighting against each other as individuals. They were teaming up with other nations to go against one another.

So, at this time, the northern kingdom of Israel had teamed up with Syria, which was the next country just north of them. And they had joined together as a strong force to go and attack Judah in the south. So, they were ganging up on each other. We can read about that briefly in 2 Kings chapter 16. We read about it here. So, these two nations, Israel and Syria, joined together to attack the weakens. Judah in the south. And so, Judah saw this threat and they thought, well, we need help as well. So, they went to Assyria, which was even further north. It can be very confusing because you had Syria and Assyria. So, Syria was the sort of medium-sized country north of Israel. Assyria was the big, big country further north.

[8 : 17] They were like the superpower of the day. They were the big, big, strong force. And so, little Judah, when it saw these countries coming, straight away sent to Assyria the big guns and said, come and help us.

And as we read in 2 Kings 16, Ahaz sent messages to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, saying, I am your servant and your son. Come and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me. And Assyria did that. They came. And in the end, Assyria wiped out Israel, the northern kingdom. So, they were fighting. And they were teaming up with other nations. And it was all really falling apart. And God was not happy. Throughout all of this, God was not happy. And the reason that God wasn't happy was because these nations, Israel and Judah, they weren't meant to be going to the other nations for help.

[9 : 27] They were meant to be going to God. They weren't meant to rely on Syria or on Assyria or on anyone else. They were meant to rely on God.

We sang about that in Psalm 146, verse 3. Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man in whom there is no salvation. God was not happy with what they were doing. The people were forgetting about God and were going elsewhere. And for that reason, God was going to bring judgment. And as we said, Isaiah has this bad news. This message of judgment. So, when you go through chapter 7 through to 11, there's a lot of talk about judgment. And as Isaiah is talking about this judgment, he uses a lot of figurative languages. The prophets, they loved to use figures of speech. They loved to use images and pictures to describe what they

were saying.

[10:38] And in these chapters, there's an awful lot of tree language. It's an awful lot of talk about trees and forests and stuff like that. If we look in chapter 7, verse 2, it's describing how Judah reacts to the threat of the northern nations.

It says, When it was told to the house of David, so that was the king of the southern kingdom, when it was told to Ahaz, who was the king, that Syria is confederate with Ephraim, Syria is joined up with Ephraim, his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, and as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

So they were shaking, just like a tree was shaking in the wind, the people were shaking with fear. And then the language comes up again in chapter 9, verse 14, it talks about God judging the northern kingdom, and it says, The Lord will cut off from Israel, head and tail, branch and rush in one day.

God will cut their branches, he will judge them, he will bring them down. But it's not just Israel and Judah who are going to be judged, even Assyria, the great, as we said, the superpower.

Assyria were like the Americans of the day, the big, strong nation, the dominant force in the world. Even they are going to be brought down. Chapter 10, verse 18, that God shall consume the glory of his forest, that's of Assyria's forest, and of his fruitful end, both soul and body, there shall be when a standard bearer fainteth, and the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

[12:12] Assyria, as well, is going to be brought down, and it's tree language, forest language, that describes it. And then the whole thing is summed up at the end of chapter 10, in verses 33 and 34, where it says, Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bow with terror, and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled, and he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

God's judgment is coming. And that's why we have this picture in verse 1 of chapter 11. There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse.

Now the word stem there, in many ways, it can be translated stump. It's the idea of a tree being cut down, and all that's left is the stem, or the stump.

It has been cut down. It has been judged. This is the bad news that Isaiah has.

Judgment is going to come. But it's really important when we say that, that we note that this judgment is not harsh, and it's not unfair, but rather it is a just judgment.

[13:39] It is a fair judgment. It is based on righteousness. Because all of these nations have turned away from God. All of them have done the things that they shouldn't have been doing.

They were rebelling against God. It talks about that in chapter 10. It says, Woe to them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that right grievousness which they have prescribed, to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless.

So these nations, they were making laws that were contrary to what God described. These nations were taking every opportunity to stamp on and oppress and exploit those who were poor, those who were widows, those who were in need.

They were harsh, hard nations. They were rebelling against God. They were exploiting the weak, and they were going to be judged.

their judgment was deserved. And we also have to remember that not only was this a fair judgment, but God was also incredibly patient.

[14:54] God was patient with his people. Because these chapters, chapter 7 through to 12, they're covering a period of up to about 30 years, maybe even a little bit more.

But it's not like God came up one day and said, if you don't stop doing this, I'm going to judge you. And that's it. God came again and again and again with his prophets, warning the people, telling them to repent.

He was patient. He was persistent. And he gave them umpteen opportunities to repent. Isaiah came with this message, and at the same time, Amos and Hosea were doing the same thing, preaching this message that judgment is coming and that they need to repent.

And in many ways, when you think of a prophet in the Old Testament, you should think of him as like a warning bell. He's warning, sending a signal out, saying, judgment is coming, you must listen and you must respond.

And God was giving them every single opportunity to repent. and the people kept ignoring it. The people didn't listen.

[16 : 08] Isaiah and all the prophets remind us that God has a set of requirements. God has standards. And he will judge us according to those standards.

Judgment is fair. God is patient. God is patient. The judgment was going to come to the people of Isaiah's day. So Isaiah has a message of bad news.

But this bad news is not just for the people of Isaiah's day. It is for us as well. This message of judgment applies to us God is judge.

And one day we are all going to stand before his judgment seat. We are all going to face God's judgment.

And as we are and by ourselves we cannot meet God's requirements. that is why we need Jesus so much.

[17 : 27] Because we can't do it ourselves. We are all going to face judgment. But when we think about that there is a really really important point from these chapters that we must emphasize.

And that is this. As we said the people in Isaiah's day were going to all sorts of different countries. They were going to Syria, Assyria or anyone even to Egypt.

Whoever they could get to help them they went to them. They thought that they could rely on something other than God. And that is such an easy easy mistake to make.

And when we think of us having to face judgment, it is so easy for us to think that we can rely on something else. Because things can look so appealing.

Because you have to remember that they went to help to Assyria. And that is because Assyria looked really reliable. Assyria looked really strong.

[18 : 33] It was the superpower of the day. Nothing could stop Assyria. If you could depend on anyone, you could depend on them. They were a glorious forest. It describes them as in these chapters.

And yet in the end, they were totally unreliable. And Assyria is long gone today. Even though back then, they looked so reliable.

And for us, other things can look so reliable and so dependable. And it's so easy for us to place our confidence in them rather than listening to God.

It's so easy for us to have a confidence in humanity and in human nature. It's so easy for us to think that humans are ultimately good and ultimately going to be okay.

And we can rely on the goodness and the strength of humanity. And so many of today's philosophies are based on that positive, optimistic view of human nature.

[19 : 36] People think that humans would really get in there and we're really becoming good and we can really rely on ourselves completely. And yet it's not true.

And you only have to turn on the news to see that that's not true. Because humans, just humans like us, are constantly slipping into the same mistakes and are constantly drawn towards sin and evil.

what happens around the world on a daily basis is overwhelming evidence that that is true. But yet so many people place their confidence in humanity.

So many people place their confidence in a general attitude of optimism and think, well, I'm sure everything will be fine. I'm sure I'll be fine on the day of judgment. I'm sure God will understand.

I'm sure God will just forgive because that's the kind of thing that God does. I'm sure I'll be all right in the end because I'm not that bad and I'll do my best and that'll be enough.

[20 : 47] It's so easy. That sounds so appealing, doesn't it? It's so easy to think like that. And yet ultimately we don't have any evidence to base that on.

It's just a hope. It's a hope that's not based on anything at all. Yet it's something that's so appealing. It's so easy for us to place our confidence and to rely on our contacts and to think that, well, my family is full of faithful Christians and I know lots of Christians and I come to church regularly or I do what I should.

I know people and I mix with a good crowd. That'll see me through in the end. But all of these things are just making the same mistake that the people of Israel and Judah were making.

They were relying on other things when really they should have been relying on God. We need to be relying on God.

We need to be listening to what God wants and making sure that we understand and obey. Isaiah has got bad news.

[22 : 10] God has his standards and we don't meet them. We're sinners and judgment will be a reality for us all.

God has done. But Isaiah is not just a bringer of bad news. Isaiah also has good news.

He has a message of judgment and he has a message of salvation. At the end of chapter 10 as we read we have this devastating picture where everything has been brought low.

The Lord shall lock the bow with terror. The high ones shall be hewn down. The haughty shall be humbled. He shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

Everything is going to be chopped down and brought to the ground. It's a picture of devastating judgment. But that's not the end of the story.

[23 : 17] Because chapter 11 follows consecutively on from chapter 10. And as it starts there, and they shall come forth, a lot of translations change that word and to then.

And that's a very good translation because the idea of the Hebrew language is very good at linking things together consecutively. And these two chapters are linked together in a consecutive sequence.

Then there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse. So salvation is going to come. But salvation is not going to come from Assyria or from some powerful country.

Salvation is going to come from a rod out of the stem of Jesse. Now what does that mean? what is Isaiah talking about? Well this verse, as we said, is using forest language.

[24 : 21] It's using tree language. So it's presenting an image for us. And so the image that we have to have in our mind is that tree has been chopped right down and all that's left is a stump in the ground.

And if you went to the castle grounds, I'm sure you would see one. You know what it's like. You have to imagine that out of that stump is growing a shoot. This word rod is the idea of a shoot or a stem or a stick growing out of that stump.

Out of that judgment, a stem is growing. And this, as we said, is a metaphor. It's an image talking about something else.

And this metaphor is referring to an individual. And we know that because as we read on the verses we see that there are lots of third person singular pronouns.

Sounds very fancy, just words like his, her, him, he. That's what's been referred to. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him and it shall make him quick of understanding.

[25 : 25] He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes. So this rod from the stem of Jesse is a person. It's a person.

But who is this person? Well, the text gives us various clues as to who this person is. First of all, it says that this person comes from the stem of Jesse.

Now what does that mean? Why does it say Jesse? Well, Jesse is referring us to two things. Jesse, as I should you remember, was David's father. So this emphasizes two really important points.

David, as we know, was the king of Israel and from him all the other kings descended. And so Jesse was like the starting point for all that. He was in many ways like the grandfather of all the kings because it was from him that they all descended.

And so although these kings reigned in Judah, many of them failed. And many of them turned away from God. And so when God is saying that he is going back to the stem of Jesse, he is saying that he is going back to the start and he is going to raise up a king who is not going to fail but who is going to be everything that all these other kings should be.

[26 : 49] This rod from the stem of Jesse is going to be a king. But the name Jesse also points us to something else. It points us to Bethlehem.

Because that is where Jesse came from. This name Jesse points us straight away to Bethlehem.

And so God is going to go right back to this humble little town of Bethlehem.

And it is from there that he will bring forth his king. Isaiah is not the only prophet to talk about that. in Micah chapter 5 verse 2 we read the following.

But you O Bethlehem Ephrata who are too little to be among the clans of Judah from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel whose origin is from old from ancient days.

This rod is a king who will come from Bethlehem. And this rod is going to grow and it is going to bear fruit.

[27 : 56] We read verse 1 again. It says there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots. Now this phrase shall grow is the same word that is used in the Bible for the idea of being fruitful.

And so when you think about it again if you go back and imagine you are walking the castle grounds and you imagine you see a tree stump with a little shoot growing out of it. If that shoot is going to bear fruit it needs to grow.

A little stem, a little rod can't bear fruit until it has grown. So this rod from the stem of Jesse is going to grow and it's going to become established and it's going to bear fruit.

Now the word to bear fruit or to grow as it's translated here is a really important word in the Old Testament and it's used on many occasions to describe the idea of becoming a great people, of becoming numerous in number.

This is referred to in many places. A good example is in Genesis 35 verse 11 when God speaks to Jacob and says, God said to him, to Jacob, I am God Almighty, be fruitful, same word, be fruitful and multiply, a nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body.

[29 : 21] So this shoot is going to grow into an established king who will draw a big people to himself. He will establish a great, great company of people.

Now it's so important to remember the context back in the Old Testament because as we said, God's people are going to be judged and they're going to be judged to the point where they're just a stump where there's pretty much nothing left.

They're going to be nearly wiped out. But from there, God will raise up the rod of Jesse and that rod will grow into a king who will multiply God's people into a great, great number.

God's God's stem, this rod will make them a great people once again. And then verse 2 describes that the spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.

And again, throughout the Old Testament, the idea of having the spirit of the Lord upon you is a really important feature of people who are going to be leaders. If you look at Joshua or the judges or the kings, it was the spirit of the Lord that came upon them and that enabled them to lead the people to be effective in their role as an authority and as a leader in God's people.

[30 : 55] And so this shoot is going to have the spirit of God upon them and that will enable them to fulfill the role of king and the role of leader with great strength and great ability.

And the spirit is going to manifest itself in wisdom and understanding in counsel and in might and the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. So this individual is going to have outstanding qualities.

He's going to be incredibly wise, incredibly strong. He's going to have a wonderfully close relationship with God. He will be a model intellectually, practically and spiritually.

This person is going to have great wisdom. And Isaiah is deliberately contrasting this individual with the great nation of Assyria.

Remember as I said, Assyria was the great big superpower. And in chapter 10 Assyria boasts in its strength. Assyria says, By the strength of my hand I have done it and by my wisdom for I am prudent and I have removed the bounds of the people and I have robbed their treasures and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.

[32 : 05] Assyria thought they were so wise. and so strong and so great. And Isaiah is saying no. Assyria is nothing. Wisdom, power and strength is in the rod that will come from the stem of Jesse.

It's this individual, this person who is the real superpower. And then verse 3 talks about what he's going to do. And we see he says it will make him quick of understanding in the feet of the Lord. He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. Again, this is really important because it's saying that this individual is not going to judge or make decisions based on what he sees and hears.

Now that's exactly what the people were doing in this day. They heard that the armies were coming. They heard that Israel and Syria had joined together and they thought their ears.

And by doing so they were abandoning God. And Isaiah is saying this individual is not going to make that mistake. This individual will base his decisions on righteousness.

[33 : 22] With righteousness he shall judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. But then notice what it says in the second half of verse four.

It says he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

So this individual is going to bring down these nations. He is going to slay the wicked. He is going to judge the earth. But he is not going to do that by violence.

He is not going to do that by being a mighty force. He is not going to do that by exerting his strength. He is going to do it by talking. He will judge.

He will slay the wicked with the rod of his mouth. He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

[34 : 25] He is not going to use violence or war. He is going to use words. So Isaiah is talking about someone. Someone who is going to be a king.

Somebody who is going to grow into a state of great strength and great ability and he is going to speak and by doing so he will bring judgment and he will bring salvation.

This shoot, this rod sounds amazing. Who is it? who is the rod out of the stem of Jesse?

It's Jesus Christ. This chapter is talking about Jesus. Jesus came from Bethlehem, descended from David and from Jesse.

And in Mark chapter 1 we read about his baptism. And what does it tell us there? When Jesus came out of the water he saw heaven opened and the spirit descending upon him as a dove.

[35 : 39] The spirit of the Lord rested upon him. And that spirit gave him these outstanding qualities of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might. And Paul describes Jesus as the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

And just as Isaiah talks about judging the poor and reproving the meek with equity for the meek of the earth, so too Jesus had that concern for the poor and weak both physically and spiritually.

And just as this rod will bring judgment with his words, Jesus himself will do exactly the same thing. There's a remarkable verse in John chapter 12, verse 48 that says this.

Jesus says, The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge. the word that I have spoken will judge him on that last day.

His words are going to bring judgment. The rod from the stem of Jesse is Jesus Christ.

[36 : 49] And he grew into the true vine. He grew and he bore fruit and he is bearing fruit and he is gathering a great, great multitude of people into his kingdom.

So as we said, Isaiah is talking about salvation, he's got good news, but that good news is focused entirely and completely on Jesus Christ.

This is a chapter that is talking about Jesus. God that reminds us of some really important and some really amazing points. Because we have to remember the order in which the Bible was written and the way in which it came together.

So easy for us to look back at it and to have a complete book in our hand. But if you think back, Isaiah wrote these words 700 years before Jesus came.

And yet when you read the Gospels, you see how unbelievably accurate Isaiah was in describing the character, the actions and the functions of Jesus.

[38 : 00] And we are in the supremely privileged position where we can look back and we can see that everything Isaiah said was absolutely spot on. He got it all right. It is completely and totally accurate.

And I always find that amazing. It should fill us with confidence in the Bible. the way it fits together, the way it works. This book written over hundreds and hundreds of years, yet it fits together perfectly.

But it also reminds us, this chapter also reminds us of the really important point that salvation in the Old Testament is through Jesus Christ.

Lots of people think that in the Old Testament people were saved by obeying the law and by doing the sacrifices and by following what the Old Testament said.

And that then after Jesus came, then people were saved through Jesus. But that's not actually true. Old Testament, New Testament, they're all saved through Jesus.

[39 : 13] The only difference is, in the Old Testament, they had to look forward. That's why they had their sacrificial systems, that's why they had their laws and the processes that they had, to help them to look forward to Jesus coming.

We are different, we get to look back. That's why we have our own different systems, we have the Lord's Supper and we have baptism, these are ways for us to look back at what Jesus had done. but Isaiah was saved because he trusted in the rod that was coming out of the stem of Jesse. He was saved because he was trusting in the Saviour that was to come, in Jesus Christ. And so that reminds us that the Old Testament is all about Jesus and it teaches us about the portion of work in Christ.

So if we want to learn about Jesus, we don't just read the New Testament, we should read the Old Testament as well because it has so much to teach us and so much for us to learn. The good news doesn't start at Matthew, it goes right through the whole of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[40 : 26] And when Isaiah brings this message of good news, this message of salvation, he's not saying it in a general sense that yes, God is going to somehow, in some way, bring salvation.

No, he is being incredibly specific, he is saying, salvation will come through this rod, through Jesus Christ. That is Isaiah's good news.

It was good news for him, it was good news for all of his people, and it's good news for you and me today as well. We still need Isaiah's good news.

This is the good news that we need to hear, and it's the good news that we need to proclaim. We need to receive it, and we need to pass it on, to spread it, to spread it far, and to spread it wide.

Some of you maybe use the website Twitter, and in the website Twitter, you get lots of little statements being made by people, and you can read them and see what they've been saying. And if they've got good news or important news or something interesting to see, you can then pass that on to everybody else.

[41 : 36] It's called retweeting. So we need to tweet the good news and we need to retweet it. We want to hear it, and we want to pass it on again and again and again, because this is the good news that we all need to hear.

But there is a crucial point in these verses, and I want to emphasize this. And that's the point that's made in verse 3. It says, he will not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.

Now, as we said, this was the mistake that the people were making. They were looking at their situation, they were hearing all the rumors of war and of trouble, and they were taking things into their own hands, and they were going after other nations, thinking that God was never going to help them, and that God was far away.

Now, it's so easy for us to look back at the Bible, and think to ourselves that back then they knew so much more about God, and they were much closer to God, and it's so different now, and everything's moved on, and everything's changed now.

It was different back then. But really, it wasn't that different back then. Back then, the people thought that God was far away. Back then, the people forgot about God.

[42 : 57] And the fact that some guy called Isaiah was talking about a rod and a stem and all these things, they didn't really listen to that. They didn't pay any attention. Instead, they just went by what their own eyes saw and what their own ears heard.

But as I said, we can look back and see that Isaiah was right. God, and when we're looking at our situation, when we're looking at the world around us, and when we see our friends or people we know turning away from God, when we see loads of people not even remotely interested in the gospel, and when we are tempted to maybe turn our back on God and to go down another route, we are making exactly the same mistake that these people were making back then.

We're judging things by our own eyes and by our own ears, and we must not make that mistake. We must look to God, and we must listen to him.

Isaiah was right back in the Old Testament. He was proved right in the New Testament when Jesus came, and he's still right today.

We need to listen to him. We need to pay attention. to what he is saying. He has a message of salvation. It's a message that we all need to hear, and it's a message that everyone in points needs to hear, and everyone on this island, and everyone in this world needs to hear.

[44 : 37] Judgment is coming, but salvation has also come through Jesus Christ. Isaiah has got good news.

So we began by thinking about this idea of good news and bad news. And we very often hear both.

If we go home tonight and watch the 10 o'clock news, or tomorrow, or whenever it may be, if we catch the news, we'll see it's a mixture of good news and bad news. Usually it's mostly bad news, but there'll usually sometimes be a bit of good news as well.

Good news and bad news, we hear it all the time. But when there's huge news, whether it's good or bad, when there's a really big piece of news, then the news channels drop everything.

And whether that might be something good, maybe like a royal wedding, or when the baby, Prince George, was born, everyone drops everything, and all the news channels and everything is just devoted to this great piece of good news.

[45 : 40] Or whether it's a huge piece of bad news. If war has broken out, or if something catastrophic has happened, all the channels drop everything and focus completely on this news.

Now, Isaiah's message, his good news and his bad news, is the biggest news of all. And this should make us drop everything.

We should drop everything for this news. Isaiah's bad news is the most serious, most urgent, most solemn piece of bad news that you will ever, ever hear.

It's news that affects all of us. We are all sinners, and we are all judged. This is the most important piece of bad news that will ever be communicated.

good news. But Isaiah's good news is the best piece of good news that has ever been told.

[46 : 45] This is the best story, the best news, the best message. It's a message of hope and a message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Christ. This is the biggest news of all. And we should be dropping everything to hear it. But the final point we have to emphasize is this.

We've been speaking about bad news and good news. And the point I want to leave you with is this. We need to listen to both. You need to hear the bad news and listen to the bad news in order to benefit from the good news.

The people of Isaiah's day didn't listen to the bad news. They didn't think there was a problem. They just ignored it. And the results were catastrophic.

They didn't pay attention to the bad news. bad news. And for that reason the good news meant nothing. I remember not long after I passed my driving test when I was 17, I had a Ford Fiesta.

[48 : 08] It was an L-Reg Ford Fiesta. It had a 1.1 litre engine. So I think there was more power in the stereo than in the engine. But it did me fine and I was delighted with my little car.

And not long after I got it, I was driving around it and it started to rattle. It made a little noise. And that was bad news. The car was making a noise. And I thought, oh, it'll be fine.

I just ignored it. I thought, it'll go away. I don't really know what it is, so I'm just going to ignore it. It'll go away. And as time went on, the rattle became louder and louder and louder.

And still, I just ignored it. I had this bad news right in front of me and yet I ignored it. I ignored it. I ignored it. I thought, it'll be fine. It's not going to happen. It's not going to be a problem. It'll go away. And then one day, I was driving along with this horrendous rattle from my engine and I changed gear and bang, my engine seized up and was completely finished.

[49 : 11] It was catastrophic. I had to get a completely new engine for the car. And all that had happened was that I had run out of oil.

But I had never checked and never thought, never wondered. I just ignored the bad news. And in the end, the results were terrible.

But if I had listened to the bad news and put a bit of oil in my car, it would have been fine. But instead, I just ignored it.

The bad news that Isaiah has for us is completely true. And we mustn't ignore it. But the fact that the bad news is true means that the good news is absolutely amazing.

God has provided a wonderful, wonderful way of salvation. The message of the prophets can be summed up by these two things, judgment and salvation.

[50 : 22] Judgment is coming for us all. But because of Jesus Christ and the salvation that he offers, on the day that his people stand before the judgment seat, and on the day when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, if you put your faith in Jesus, he will say this to you.

Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

That is really, really good news. Jesus, may we all put our faith in the rod that comes from the stem of Jesus.

Amen. Let us pray. Thank you.