

Way of Salvation 8am

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Our God and Father, thank you for this opportunity to be together to partake in the sacrament of the Holy Communion.

Thank you for the reading of the scriptures. Thank you for the opportunity to pray. Thank you for the chance to be quiet before you.

We ask that as we think through your word that you will speak to the special circumstances of each of our hearts, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. I'm not always grateful for David having assigned these topics to preach on.

And I literally have writhed under Isaiah 11 all week. This morning I woke at 5 o'clock in the morning full glass.

[1 : 13] And I had a great moment of inspiration. The reason it's difficult to preach about Isaiah now is that I think we are like Isaiah, only I think that the Canadian of 1998 might not be inclined to say, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

But I am an arrogant man and I dwell in the midst of an arrogant people. And that we are marked very much in our structure and society today by arrogant self-sufficiency.

And if you want to listen to Isaiah, the only way you can listen to it is from a place of humble gratitude. And so I pray that God will give us that grace to listen with humble gratitude to what it is that Isaiah has to say.

There's a note in the Manchester Guardian this week about a prophet. And he's a prophet of our own time.

He's called a radical hero of our age. In one of the New York papers was stated as being arguably the most important intellectual alive today.

[2 : 53] His name was, his name is Noam Chomsky. He was at a conference that this, this was written up in the Guardian.

And his message was to be, Capitalism does not work. And the comment on his prophetic message was, he neither had the text to prove his case, nor did he arouse the multitude in his favor.

So the function of a prophet from this week's Manchester Guardian is that he must have a text to prove his case. And he must move the multitude.

And the possibility of Noam Chomsky failing to do that makes you wonder how Isaiah of 3,000 years ago could possibly achieve it.

And yet there is a strange way in which God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners has spoken unto us by the prophets. That that's what, the difference being that Noam Chomsky was to speak out of the chaos of our world economy and to try and bring a message saying where we're going.

[4 : 23] But Isaiah was to speak out of the presence of God and tell us where we are. And that's how Isaiah speaks.

And Isaiah speaks, even though from across the centuries, he speaks from the eternal presence of God into the time-locked circumstances of our lives.

The thing that Isaiah says is this.

He says it under seven pictures that he has. And I'd like you to. Well, I'd like you to think of these seven pictures.

The first of the seven pictures is a stump. The second is a leader.

[5 : 34] The third is a mountain. The fourth is a time to come. The fifth is a banner, or as it is in the text that was read for us this morning, an ensign.

The sixth is a remnant. And the seventh is a highway. Those seven pictures, I'd like you to ask yourself on Wednesday morning over coffee whether you can remember the seven pictures from

Isaiah chapter 11.

A stump, a leader, a mountain, a time, a banner, a remnant, and a highway. And I want just to put those seven pictures before you as they are unfolded for us in this 11th chapter.

They're unfolded in this way. First, a good BC illustration. You have to imagine in your mind a clear cut.

Everything's down. Everything's been cut. And there's only a whole mass of apparently dead stumps. And that's the condition of the people of God when Isaiah starts to speak.

[6 : 56] A whole mass of dead stumps. But out of one of those stumps, there comes a shoot. And from that shoot, a branch.

And from that branch, fruit. So that out of something which is apparently dead, and the whole sort of Davidic kings were gone.

They were all cut off. But from that apparently desolate situation comes a shoot. Out of the stump of Jesse, it says.

Do you remember that lovely story in the Old Testament where Samuel goes in search of a king to be anointed? And he's told to go to Jesse. And Jesse brings before him his seven sons.

And all of them look as though they were capable of being a king. And the Lord says, no, not that one. No, not that one. No, not that one. And he goes through them all and says, is that all there is?

[8 : 05] And Jesse says, there's one boy out looking after the sheep. Get him, Samuel says. And he comes. And he's David.

And he's the one whom Samuel anoints to be the king. But now we reach further back in the stump of Jesse to find a king that has been overlooked.

And yet is perfectly suited to the task. So from the stump of Jesse comes the second thing. The leader. And the leader is somebody that they were looking forward to his coming.

And he was marked by certain characteristics. The whole chapter is about this leader. On this Pentecost Sunday, it's important that I read to you from 11, verse 2, which was already read by Margaret.

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 the fear of the Lord.

[9 : 19] And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes. Or decide by what he hears with his ears.

But with righteousness will he judge the needy. With justice will he give decision for the poor of the earth. And he will not judge the needy. So he's a...

He... I mean, they've been through a whole raft of kings. And some have exploited them. And some have led them. And some have been champions.

And some have disgraced themselves. But then Isaiah says there is coming a leader. And the quality of that leader is that the spirit of the Lord is upon him.

And he will be marked by the seven gifts of the spirit. And the same gifts which... When you are ordained in the Anglican church, the bishop prays for you that you might have such gifts of wisdom and of rest.

[10 : 26] Of understanding and of counsel and of power and of knowledge. And of the fear of the Lord. And so this is the kind of king he is.

And what he does is that he brings justice. You know how we in despair watch the process of justice go higher and higher and higher.

So that anybody who wants to go to court has to go with a million dollars in their pocket to even begin to raise a point. But this is a different kind of justice.

This is a justice that comes down and it permeates the whole structure of society. Every encounter between people.

Justice is brought to light. Justice in every situation. Justice in every relationship. That's what this leader is going to do. He's a different kind of leader. Our political leaders we all know.

[11 : 27] Are forced into a position of justice for the few and tyranny for the many. But this leader is going to be different.

Because the justice is going to perk down into the most basic level of our society. That's one thing it says about it.

So that's this leader. And he's a powerful man. Well then. Next to the leader comes the mountain. And the leader you see will have a great city.

And the city will be on a mountain. And this mountain will be a place to which all the nations of the earth will come. And this mountain will be the place where the leader's authority, his power, his understanding, his wisdom, his counsel, will all be within the context of the fear of the Lord which produces worship in the hearts of people.

All in that context this will be exercised on that mountain. And the impact of that is wonderful to behold. Because the impact of that is that the wolf will lie down with the lamb.

[12 : 52] And the leopard and the goat will feed together. The calf and the lion. The little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear. The infant and the cobra.

The young child reaching out to the viper's nest. The justice will move in. And somehow in some remarkable way the character of the people who come in touch with this leader will be transformed into something entirely different.

In our proud state that we live in at the moment. We consider it to be a great matter that we declare unconditionally the rights that the wolf has over the lamb.

And the rights that the leopard has over the goat. And the rights that the lion has over the calf. That it's necessary to their life. And we try and affirm them in their worst characteristics.

But this is going to transform people. And change them at the most basic kind of level. Even so to the point where a young child shall lead them.

[14 : 07] But this is going to be a great matter of fact. We try and then in a sense preserve the rights of the viper and the cobra to be among us.

But there their power and their poison will be gone. And that's the kind of mountain that it's going to be. And the thing that is going to be characteristic of it, you see, of this mountain is that it will be the source from which the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, even as it says as the waters cover the sea.

Now knowledge for us in the information age is a kind of abstract thing that we mostly store in our computers, but knowledge when it's spoken of here is commitment, that which you know you are committed to.

I mean, that's what it says about a man and a woman. The way it's described in the Old Testament is to say, you will not know me unless you are committed to me.

That's what they say to each other. That's the basis of marriage. You will not know me unless you're committed to me. And so we don't know the Lord until we are committed to him, until we have given ourselves to him and he is able to make himself known to us.

[15 : 45] And that kind of knowledge is going to not be the rare commodity possessed by a few, but that's going to be everybody. Remember how it talks about the child Samuel not knowing the Lord?

And then he came to the time when he did know the Lord, so that people will now live out of both their knowledge of the Lord and their commitment to him.

And that's what life on the mountain is going to be about. And that's going to be seen by all people. Well, the next thing in the picture is a time.

A time for this is going to come. Now, Isaiah, as you know, was preaching many centuries ago, and he was looking forward to the coming of the person of Christ.

That was the time that he was looking forward to, and he speaks of in that day. In that day, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

[16 : 49] In that day, God's perfect ruler will be present. Well, that's different from us, because for us, that day has come with the coming of the Lord Jesus and God making himself known to us through Jesus so that we have given to us the knowledge of the Lord.

And that time has come. Now, it hasn't come in the political and economic sphere, but the reality of the presence of the kingdom is among us, and the time is fulfilled.

Now is the hour. So that's time. We have the stump. You have the leader. You have the mountain. You have the time.

And then it talks about the banner. And the banner is, in a sense, the holding forth of the person of this leader to whom everybody who, in their frustration, looking for a leader, they will turn to him.

It's, in a sense, a picture of the proclamation of the gospel to all the nations of the earth. The banner will be held up, signaling the presence of this leader, and people will come to him.

[18 : 23] That's how, in the Old Testament stories, the various leaders set up their banner, and all who would join them, and they were led into battle.

Well, so the banner has been set up of this leader who comes from the stump of Jesse, and who has established himself upon the mountain.

And his time has come, and the banner is held up before all the nations, and the nations come to him. They come to him as one who will lead them into a place of peace and of hope and of love.

The sixth picture is the remnant, and David spoke about that in the sermon last Sunday. And the remnant will lead the way.

It will be, the remnant will be those who have first, who recognize this leader that has been given, and who give themselves to him, and who move towards him.

[19 : 34] And from exile and from captivity, in all the quarters of the earth, this remnant will lead people back to the mountain, back to the person of the leader, the God-appointed leader, born of the stump of Jesse.

And they will bring him, lead people back to that. And the final picture is the picture of the highway. And the picture is that all the natural barriers, remember they talked about the wolf and the lamb, and how that whole thing is going to be turned upside down.

And then it talks now about the natural barriers that stand in the way. As Margaret read for us this morning, the Gulf of Egypt, or the Red Sea, would be covered over, because that's the picture you see, of people coming out of slavery to head towards the mountain, out of their bondage to head towards the mountain.

And led by the remnant, people from all the nations will come to the leader who is established on the mountain. And this is the consummation of all that is to happen, that the highway will be established so that people will have the infrastructure which will lead.

We talk about highways as being part of the infrastructure of our cities. Well, the highway will be there so that people will have ready access to get to the kingdom.

[21 : 24] So those are the seven pictures. And they are pictures which belong to us because in the chaos and despair which we are confronted with by the media all the time, there is hope, there is peace, there is love, there is a kingdom, there is a leader, there is a mountain, there is the knowledge of the Lord which belongs to us and which is made available to us in Jesus Christ.

So there you have it. The stump, the leader, the mountain, the time, the herald, the remnant, and the kingdom.

And that's what our world is all about. It's not about what we do. It's not about the kingdoms that we set up and all of which come to pass.

It's about what God is doing among us. It's what God's purpose in history is. It's that on which alone there is, in which alone there is faith, and there is hope, and there is promise.

And you see, it's that kind of thing to which we are called as the people of God and to which, in effect, you, as part of the remnant, are coming this morning to partake of the Holy Communion.

[23 : 03] And that's the whole sort of panorama of history that is laid before us by Isaiah in chapter 11. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it summarizes it all.

And it talks about that panorama of history and says, What a tremendous picture it is.

Pentecost Sunday is a time of renewal. God grant that His Holy Spirit may, through the words that He has given to us in Isaiah 11, bring you to a renewed awareness of the gifts of the Spirit and a renewed awareness of the high calling we have as the remnants to lead the whole world to the mountains where the leader whom God has appointed reigns.

That's our life and that's our ministry. Amen.