

Isaiah 11:1-10

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[0:00] Folks, while you're standing, let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening. In Christ's name, Amen.

! Yes, please be seated, be seated. Hello everyone, nice to see you, nice to see you. If you're new, my name is Aaron Roberts. I'm one of the ministers here. So we're second week of Advent, and during Advent we think about a number of things. We think about the fact that Christ came into the world as a baby, and secondly, we remember that Christ has promised that he will come again to fix the world.

Tonight we're looking at Isaiah 11, which captures both those ideas, and I know what you're thinking. You may be thinking, look, I just heard Isaiah read a couple of minutes ago, and I don't see how you got those two things out of that reading.

You may be thinking, I don't know, perhaps you're thinking this, Jacob. Why can't we just read the manger stuff? The shepherds, the angels, Mary, it's easy to understand, right? Easy to understand.

It's way more Christmassy, and I hear you. Isaiah 11, it's a tricky read. It is not super straightforward. These passages are hard. You're reading it, it starts with a tree and ends up with a snake and babies and stuff, and you're like, what's going on?

[1:29] My job is to explain these things to you, but first I just want to talk about the issue that the Bible is tricky in places. It's tricky, right?

Sometimes God speaks very clearly to us. Jesus says things like, no one can come to the Father except through me, or love your enemies. And we're like, you know what? I can grab a hold of that. I see what you're saying there. It's obvious. It's very straightforward.

But other times, God's words are not very direct. And so we ask ourselves, why is that? Like, why? Why? Why does God reveal himself in the Bible through so many different genres?

And sometimes it's really clear, and other times it's like Isaiah 11 here. It's hard to know how it all sort of connects. It was written over 1,500 years. There's 66 books. There's so many different authors and so many different literary styles. Why is that?

Folks, I think it's got something to do with how great the message is. It's so great. It's so wonderful. It's so rich that it can only be talked about with layers and layers of images and metaphors and songs and story and poetry and history.

[2:47] So when we read it, it stretches our hearts in just lots of different ways to help us understand God's great love for us.

Right then. That was a preamble. Let's get to Isaiah 11, which is a bit tricky. It has the feel of a poem, doesn't it?

At its simplest level, I think it's trying to tell us two things. It's trying to tell us about a person, Jesus, who it's prophesying is going to come, and the qualities of a ministry that this person will have.

And it's telling us what life will be like when Jesus fully rules over the world. So again, Jesus' ministry, what it was like, and what his rule will ultimately be like in the future.

So let's talk about these two things. The first thing, it's telling us about Jesus and his ministry now. Well, you know what I mean by now, like back in the days now, right? So let's start with a tree stump. Verse 1.

[3 : 45] The stump of Jesse. What does it even mean? Right? The stump of Jesse. A branch from its roots shall bear fruit.

Here's what it means. So, well, actually, no. Let me tell you about a mate of mine. So I've got this mate of mine in Australia, and he had a big stump in his backyard, and he needed it gone. One way to get rid of a stump is to burn it.

So what you do is you drill these big holes in it. You fill it with wood chips, add some accelerant. And you just burn it out. You just, like, basically burn the whole thing out. Anyway, he videoed that tree stump burning technique over a number of days, edited it down to one hour, and put it online.

I just looked it up literally last week to see how many views it had. 120,000 views of just burning of a stump. Apparently it's a whole subgenre, stump burning.

Why? Why would you burn a stump, though? Why would you burn a stump? Why would you do that? Because they're useless. They're dead. They don't do anything.

[4 : 49] Look at verse 1 again. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from its roots shall bear fruit. So what does this poetic line mean? It means there's this dead thing, which normally would be like, let's just get rid of it.

Let's just get rid of it. It means this dead thing is going to produce life. So what's the dead thing it's talking about? The dead thing is a dynasty. It represents a family line of kings that has come to an end because they're useless.

It specifically mentions somebody called Jesse, who was the father of David. You might remember King David from the Old Testament. David was a king, had a few bumps, but basically good guy.

Loved God. And kind of got things pretty sorted. But his family line following him all went sideways. Disaster.

So the stump, I mean, they're supposed to be leading the people, bringing them to God. They're supposed to do all these things, and they were terrible. So the stump represents this family line, this dynasty that was once a great tree, and now it's just a stump.

[5 : 57] It's just a dead thing. It's useless. But, the passage says, out of this dead thing, like a little shoot's going to come. Like a little, all of a sudden a little bit of green's going to come.

And that little bit of green is actually going to produce some roots and some fruit. So what's all that about? Folks, it's talking about Jesus. So 700 years before Christ's birth, Isaiah, inspired by God, had this vision.

And it was a good king was going to come from David's line, and Jesus is the fulfillment of this. Which is why in the New Testament, Jesus is called the son of David.

So he's this little green shoot that's going to come up. And what's it telling us about this king, about Jesus? Well, that's the next few lines there. So let's look at verse 2.

It says, the spirit of little be upon him. Spirit of wisdom and understanding and counsel and might. So it's saying the spirit of the Lord is going to be upon this new king, Jesus. Permanently on him.

[6 : 59] Meaning he will think and act and operate like God. Do you remember the big deal that the Gospels make about Jesus' baptism? It says the spirit of the Lord is going to be upon him.

That's what that reference is there for. And then it says that this shoot, this person will have God's wisdom and God's understanding. Now, does this sound like Jesus?

I mean, yes. I mean, think about it. Was Jesus ever stumped by a person? Did anyone ever get the better of Jesus when Jesus was like, oh, really? He got me there and had to go home and think about his life, you know?

Did Jesus ever get it wrong with people? I mean, the smartest people in the world came to Jesus and tried to argue with him and had leave him speechless. And when Jesus is dealing with people that are really broken, he always seemed to have the right things to say.

Do you remember the woman that was caught in adultery and she's filled with such shame and it was a crowd of people that want to kill him? And Jesus said a few things and then he said, now, where are your accusers? Oh, that's awesome, right?

[8 : 02] What an awesome thing to say. Verse 2, the next thing it says is that he'll not only be wise, have these amazing words, he'll have might, meaning he'll have power.

Does this sound like Jesus? That he won't just say good things, he'll be able to do good things. I'll remind you of a few stories about Jesus.

Once you probably know, Jesus quieted a storm with just a word. Everyone thought they were going to die, he just says, quiet, be still, it's gone. Think about all the healings Jesus performed. How he exercised demons.

A dead child was there and Jesus said, little girl, just get up. She rose. You could say this, Jesus showed that he had power and might over nature, over sickness, over evil and even over death.

He was like no one that ever lived. I mean, you can talk up great people in history, right? There's a lot of great people in history. Done a lot of cool things. But no one's in the ballpark of Jesus.

[9 : 07] No one comes close to him. Verse 4 adds this to the equation. Again, talking about Jesus. Verse 4. But with righteousness he shall judge the poor. Which means he will bring justice to the poor is what that means.

He will decide with equity for the meek of the earth. He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. It's really full on. What does this mean? It means it's saying that this person, this king, from the line of Jesse that's coming, Jesus we know he's talking about, can think well, speak well, has power to do incredible things.

But the question we ask ourselves is, is he good? And this says he is good. Verse 4 is this kind of image of a judge on a bench. A judge who's not swayed.

A judge who can't be manipulated. Who makes things right for the oppressed. Who makes things right for the poor. The flip side of that is he will bring justice to evil as well.

Well, this is a good king. Okay, so that's the first part of the passage. From a dead dynasty, a dead tree, a stump, a tragic line of corrupt leaders, this little bit of green will pop up.

[10 : 16] Saying that green will bear fruit. That green represents a king that's coming, who's wise, who's powerful, and is good, and is talking about Jesus.

And this is the Jesus we meet in the gospel stories. But despite Jesus coming, the world is still a bit of a mess, right? But the Bible also says that the Jesus of the gospels will come back, and he's going to fix the world.

That's what the second half of the passage is about. This is verses 6 to 9. That's all the animal stuff. So let's look at all the animal stuff. This section answers the question, when Christ returns to fix the world, what's it going to be like?

And that's really hard to wrap our heads around, we think. Like knowing who you are, knowing what happens in your brain, it's hard to imagine the world kind of sorting itself out, you know?

It's hard to imagine me sorting myself out. So it says, what's life going to be like? And the author says, let me paint you a picture. And it's almost kind of, it's like just completely over the top, isn't it, of how awesome it is.

[11:25] And remember, it's talking about a different word. It's talking about a world that doesn't exist right now, but a world to come. And another reminder, this is poetry. So it's trying to communicate something wonderful and true, but poetically and really memorably.

And it is really memorable. Look at verse 6 here. Look at verse 6 there. Now, a wolf would normally eat a lamb. But in this passage, they're hanging out.

They're hanging out. They're just hanging out. Just like hanging out. Like we're hanging out right now. But it's more than that. The word dwell there means like they actually live together.

They're like roommates. They live in the same place. It's not like they're hanging out like on a big field and they just kind of keep their distance. No, they're like roommates. They're making breakfast, playing board games.

Doing the whole thing. There's obviously been some incredible change in them. An astonishing change. Every hostility has been replaced with friendship.

[12:27] It's the same for the leopard and the goat. The cow and the bear. It's a picture of just harmony. Under Jesus' rule. You know, the earth will just be saturated with peace.

And the point is, what God has done for the animals here, this unimaginable change in them, he will do for us.

For the world. And it gets better and better. Like it's just these layers and layers. Like we've got all these former foes living together. And they're all in the house.

We're all hanging out. And then a baby turns up. And it's like, oh, we'll just chuck them in with the snakes. And they'll have a great time. They'll have a great time. And no one's going like, oh, we shouldn't do that.

It's like, oh, of course. Snakes and babies. It's just like a thing, you know. They're having a blast. It's like peace and safety and kindness. This is what life will look like when Christ returns.

[13:33] Remember, it's a poem. But it's trying to help us imagine the unimaginable. This complete restoration. That's the second half of the reading.

Okay, I'm going to finish up now. So this was written like 700 BC. So what is that? 2,700 years ago. A promise from God.

Who says here in Isaiah 11. I'm going to send you a king who's going to fix the world. So we read passages at this time of the year because Christmas reminds us that God's actually made good on this promise, isn't he?

Because a child has been born. So the thing promised, it's been kicked off. That whole project's been kicked off. God has made good on that promise.

Because a child has been born. And I think these ideas are life transforming. Let me tell you, give you one reason why, how this can be life transforming.

[14:38] I'll give you one example. It changes the way we suffer. It changes the way we suffer. So if you live with pain, with trauma, whatever, it's relationship struggles, life feels like a grind, whatever it is.

Jesus says, I'm coming back. The Bible says he's coming back. Which means your best days are ahead of you.

Which means we can be people of great hope. No matter how things look now. We can be people of hope because we know that ultimately, ultimately, everything will be okay.

I'll say it one more time and then I'll finish. Folks, whatever you're going through, everything will be okay.

Amen.