

Isaiah 11:1-10 *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—³ 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; ⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. ⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷ The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. ⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.*

The Root of Jesse will arise

1. Endowed with the Spirit
2. He will bring peace
3. That results in glory

Wouldn't it be nice if there wasn't so much killing going on right now in Ukraine? Wouldn't it be nice if Turks and Kurds in Syria would get along? Wouldn't it be nice if there were no drug runners crossing our border? Wouldn't it be nice if there were no more killings in Chicago? Wouldn't it be nice if there were peace on earth?

Or, if you can't have peace between nations and on our city streets, wouldn't it be nice to have peace within our families? Wouldn't it be nice to have a whole week together as husband and wife and not have a fight? Wouldn't it be nice if our children didn't fight with each other? Wouldn't it be nice to go on a family vacation and not have any blow-ups? Wouldn't it be nice if tempers didn't flare so quickly, like the match that suddenly ignites? Wouldn't it be nice to have peace in our homes?

Or, if you can't have peace in the family, wouldn't it be nice to have peace within myself? Wouldn't it be nice if I wasn't so hard on myself? Wouldn't it be nice if I was calm on the inside? Wouldn't it be nice if I could fall asleep instead of lying there awake for hours because my mind won't shut off? Wouldn't it be nice if I could at least have peace within myself?

Of, if I can't have these, wouldn't it be nice to have peace at least for a few days around Christmas? Christmas is supposed to be a time of peace on earth, but peace often can't be found. Peace is what Isaiah prophesies to us this morning. Peace because the Root of Jesse will arise.

700 years before Christ was born, Isaiah lived at a time when peace was hard to come by. The rich took advantage of the poor, most lived godless lives and King Ahaz had even locked the doors of the temple! God was not going to stand by idly while his people mocked him. He was going to use Assyria and Babylon as his chainsaws to mow down the proud and arrogant of Judah. The royal line of King David would be reduced to nothing but a stump.

Have you ever seen those machines that can cut down a tree, strip its bark and leave it as a pile of logs in just minutes? They are a one-man logging crew that can clear a forest in no time. That's the picture we get from Isaiah in chapter ten. God would log off Judah and the nations around them. The once powerful nations would be cut down to mere stumps.

But in the stump of Judah there was life and hope. *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.* Do you have your Christmas tree up yet? Some people have fake trees. Some people go to a lot to buy a real tree and some people go out into the woods or to a tree farm to cut their own. When you cut down a tree, the stump left in the ground is pretty much dead. But occasionally, there is enough life in that stump to grow a shoot, a new branch.

A shoot from a stump doesn't look like much. It is weak and vulnerable. It can easily be broken or cut off. Jesse was the father of King David. David's royal line had been cut down to a stump. But from that stump would come a shoot, a branch. He wouldn't look like much. Born in a barn and raised in a backwater town, he had no royal trappings or power. He was just a shoot. A branch.

What a tree grew from that stump! Isaiah said it would bear fruit. From the tree of the cross on which the Savior died, the fruit of God's rescue from sin and death sprouted. From that tree came the fruit of new life to all who believe in Jesus. From that tree came the fruit of God's New Testament Church – that's us. Our lives of faith are part of the harvest of that shoot from Jesse's stump. Our life in heaven, rooted in Jesus, is also part of the fruit, and we will eat of that fruit into eternity.

He calls it the stump of Jesse because this new branch would not only be a son of David, but a new David, a replacement David, a better David. *The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him.* He is a weak, powerless branch, but he is God and God's Spirit is with him. A mistake many Christians make in celebrating Christmas is that of spending too much time on the unimportant circumstances surrounding the Christ child's birth. By contrast, the Apostle Paul never says a thing about the stable and the manger and the diapers and the fact that there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn. He talks about "when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship." (Galatians 4:4-5) God-pleasing celebration of Christ's birth will look away from the unimportant details and concentrate instead on the miracle God accomplished through that birth. Isaiah points us to the miracle that a baby from Jesse's line would be born who is God. This is the miracle of the virgin birth. This is the miracle of Christmas.

This is not the only miracle of Christmas. We also see the miracle in what that child brings. *He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.* The rod of his mouth is God's Word with which he whips, flogs and punishes peoples' sin. With the Word he judges in righteousness declaring righteous the spiritually poor who trust only in the Savior. And to them he promises peace.

Christmas is supposed to be a season of peace, but instead it's work, work, and rush, rush. But we do it to ourselves. Who says we have to shop, bake and decorate? Does that bring the Christmas spirit? Does that bring peace?

The scene that Isaiah describes is not a scene you'll see on the Animal Planet network. Wolves don't hang out with lambs; they devour them. Leopards don't play games with goats; they make them game. And any parent who lets his toddler play by a nest of poisonous snakes is going to be charged with child endangerment! Sure, mankind was created to rule over God's creation, but the fall into sin turned animals into wild beasts so that when we head off into the backcountry we do so with a certain amount of care. We fear wild animals because they live by instinct, not conscience.

The fall into sin has made the animals the way they are, but it's also made us the way we are. And the truth is we are worse than the animals! At least, most of them attack and kill for their own survival. We rip into each other for laughs. We tear apart reputations because we think we have a right to judge. We purr outward piety on Sunday morning, but inside lurks a lion that is eager to devour. That old animal within us cannot be domesticated; it can only be killed.

Isaiah pictures for us a complete reversal of the effects of the fall into sin. It begins in the heart that has peace. That peace comes from Jesus, the shoot from the stump of Jesse. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1) Justified, that is, declared not guilty in God's court, we are at peace with God. We don't fear his judgment. We don't fear his anger. Jesus has stepped into our lives with his righteousness freely offered in the gospel. There is peace.

Now, though all the world around us embraces hell, we have heaven. Though our sinful natures lead us to do wrong things, we have forgiveness in our King, who gave up his own life to make it so. Though our most peaceful days are never totally free from tension and turmoil, we have a peace the world cannot give – a peace born of faith in Jesus that is everlasting.

As I said, that begins in the believer's heart and from there it brings peace into our lives and into our relationships. It spreads in the world as the gospel does its work in human hearts. And it will end in a world free from sin, death and fear. Won't that be glorious!

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. In the Civil War, one soldier had the duty of carrying the flag into battle. If that man fell, someone else would pick up the flag and carry it forward. If you have seen the movie, *Glory*, starring Denzel Washington, you know what I am talking about. Just as the flag was the rallying point for the soldiers, Jesus is the banner for the peoples. He is the rallying point for life and peace and eternal rest. And it will all end in glory for you and me.

The Root of Jesse has brought us peace. Christmas promises the peace of the garden of Eden restored. In Christ, we are at peace with our sin, at peace with our God, at peace for all eternity.