

“A NEW SHOOT FROM AN OLD STUMP.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

December 19, 2021, 10:30 AM

Text for the Sermon: Isaiah 11:1-10, 16

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, come with power and anoint the preaching of your eternal Word. Make it to be wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge for us. May we be transformed by it and delight in it, for the sake of Christ, in His name. Amen.

Introduction.

Have you ever had one of those conversations with an excited four-year-old who has so much they want to tell you and they use “and” about a hundred times as they string together one excited thought after another.

Isaiah 11 is like that. Every single verse except verse 9 starts with the Hebrew word for and. Just in our verses printed in our bulletin there are 27 ands in the original (19 in the ESV).

We should read this with a sort of breathless pace, with an increasing heart rate as Isaiah describes the Messianic reign with excited anticipation, piling on one detail after another. It should be the way we think about the future second coming of the Messiah, excited expectation.

Text: Isaiah 11

With each sermon on these Messianic prophecies in Isaiah I have reminded us that Isaiah is prophesying during the later days of Israel and Judah, when the mighty empire of Assyria is breathing down their necks and threatening a great destruction. Assyria is the tool in God’s hands He is using to bring His discipline and judgment on the sin of the nation. Assyria is only doing God’s bidding.

Isaiah 11:1, A little shoot from an old stump.

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

How can this be a Messianic prophecy? It is so humble, so hopeless, so pathetic. How can a perfect King and a perfect kingdom grow from something so lifeless?

We have a great example of how bleak this situation is right out there in our church yard. Remember that great fir tree, how majestic and beautiful, how the kids enjoyed playing under it. Remember the Lynden Tribune article years ago praising it as one of the great trees of Lynden.

And now look at it, just a stump where once a mighty tree flourished. No branches for birds to nest in, no branches for kids to play under, no shade to rest in, no life, no movement. Sin brought it down, it was poisoned, struck down, and died.

The same thing happened in the OT. From Jesse grew a mighty king, King David. And God made a promise to David that his descendent would sit on his eternal throne.

II Samuel 7:16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

But then sin brought down the house and line of David as king after king poisoned Israel, they disobeyed and rebelled and led Israel into apostasy until God brought down the axe of judgment in the form of Assyria and Babylon, and Israel was taken into exile and captivity.

The tree of Jesse became a stump. No branches, no fruit, no life. The promise of God seemed doomed to become nothing.

But God. In Isaiah 6 God said there is a holy seed in the stump (6:13). In Isaiah 7 God said a virgin would conceive and bear a son, life from one who knew no man. In Isaiah 9 God said a little child would be born, a son given, light in darkness.

Now God says a lifeless, dead, dark stump will send forth a shoot, a branch will bear fruit. Never was there a more lifeless stump in dry ground than the obscure, conquered nation of Israel in the Roman empire in the first century. Poor, powerless, oppressed.

And what about this Messiah, born in obscurity, in poverty, with no status, whose royal lineage is traced back to a failed ancient dynasty.

Many of you will remember six years ago, August 29, 2015, we had a big summer wind storm that toppled a huge 70-year-old Pin Oak across Front Street. When it fell it completely destroyed the huge Pin Oak on this side of the street, whacking it down to nothing but a big trunk. It was taller than a stump, but there was almost nothing left in the way of branches.

I remember at the time thinking they should just cut it the rest of the way down and plant a new tree, but the city left it. I watch it every year and how much growth there is. This next summer it will touch the two trees on either side. New life, new growth out of a destroyed trunk.

There are times when God's kingdom looks all but lost and destroyed, beaten down to nothing. There are times when God's work seem utterly insignificant, hopelessly slow, or small.

Zechariah 4:10 For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice.

Don't despise small beginnings.

Isaiah reminds Israel of a time when a little root, the youngest and smallest eighth son of Jesse rose from Jesse and became the royal line of David.

God loves small beginnings. It is staggering really when you consider how great and mighty God is, you would think a big God would like big things. God is not afraid of small things. God is patient enough to endure centuries of small things and small beginnings.

We want to get from point A to point B in the shortest distance and fastest time. God draws straight with a crooked line. God makes a prophecy to Isaiah and then takes 700 years to fulfill it. God is not on our schedule or timeline. God is a God of waiting.

Rejoice in God's small, slow ways in your life, like babies and baptisms. God says if we are faithful in small things, He will give us big things. Small obedience will lead to much fruit.

How can a fruitless stump bear fruit? And what fruit does it bear?

The rest of our text is Isaiah's answer. It will be by the power of the Spirit of the Lord, and the fruit of eternal peace.

Isaiah 11:2-5, the Spirit of the Lord.

This dead stump will grow a shoot by the power of the Spirit of the Lord, just as a virgin will conceive by the overshadowing power of the Spirit of the Lord.

This shoot will be more than just a descendent of the royal line of David. There were a lot of kings who descended from the royal line of David. But this one will be the anointed one, endowed with the Spirit of the Lord. Remember the dove descending on Jesus at His baptism.

God wants us to see how sufficient, perfectly capable, adequate the Messiah is. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him. Isaiah describes the anointing of the Spirit in three pairs.

This Messianic King will have ***wisdom and understanding***. That is He will be wise, and He will be able to use that wisdom in the right way, with discernment. Wisdom to govern wisely.

The Messianic King will have ***counsel and might***. He needs no advisors. He has good plans, good ideas, and He has the power to do them. Power to lead victoriously.

The Messianic King will have ***knowledge and the fear of the Lord***. This king has intimate knowledge of God and a deep reverence for Him. Necessary for spiritual leadership.

There is no true knowledge without knowing God. God is the creator of all that is. In order to rightly understand and have true knowledge of all things and their meaning and purpose you have to know God. Back when the universities of our nation were founded they had divinity schools. They understood the inseparable link between theology and everything else.

If we don't know God, we know nothing. If you start with a vacuum, you get nothing. What does Proverbs say, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If all our knowledge is not a pursuit of knowing God, then it is a waste. To not know God is to be a fool.

Now why does the Messiah, the Son of God, delight in the fear of God? Jesus delights in fear of God because He lives to please the Father. But also Jesus delights in the fear of the Lord because He doesn't live in the fear of man.

All of us either live in the fear of man or the fear of God, one or the other. Much of social media these days is living in the fear of man, seeking the approval of man, wanting to impress or look good or sound smart. But the fear of man is bondage, it is oppressive, it leads to depression and bitterness.

Jesus doesn't fear man. It was a huge compliment when the Pharisees who were trying to trap Jesus, said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances" (Matthew 22:16).

We have a Messiah who is like no one else. Because He has all knowledge and intimate knowledge of God and because He delights in the fear of God, He will carry out His reign, in three ways, *He will rule in truth, in justice (righteousness), and in power.*

The Messiah will rule in truth because He will not judge by appearances, by what lies on the surface, but He will get below the surface to the heart of the matter. He searches and knows our inmost thoughts.

This is what God said to Samuel when God sent Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint the future king. As Jesse's oldest son was brought to Samuel, he said:

I Samuel 16:6-7 "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, *"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*

The Messiah will not judge the way we judge, by appearances, by quick judgments, without all the facts, by just what we hear or want to believe. We judge a book by the cover, we judge a person by their skin or looks or outward behavior. We don't have all the facts, so we will be ignorant of the truth.

The Messiah will rule in justice, with righteousness and equity. He will do right and put things right. And this is especially good news for those who are oppressed, downtrodden, taken advantage of, minorities, powerless. He will be impartial; He can't be bought.

This is the sure sign of a very good king, when the least, the lost, the lowly, the unimportant have a champion for their cause. If He is for them, then everyone else will be treated well as well.

The Messiah will rule in power, counsel and might. He will be able to rule in truth and justice because He has all power. He is no pawn, no puppet, no hireling. In Him there is no weakness, contrary to any appearances. This shoot and root will be a mighty oak.

Isaiah wants us to take a good long, hard look at the Messiah and decide what you think of Him. Look at His nature, His character, His greatness, and goodness and come to the conclusion there is none like Him, none as worthy of all our worship and all our obedience.

The fruit of the Spirit is for us as well. We can all drink from this fountain. To him who lacks wisdom and strength, let him ask. Seek all of this from Christ in prayer and God will supply with undeserved generosity.

Isaiah 11:6-9, and the wolf shall dwell with the lamb.

From this Spirit endowed shoot will come the greatest fruit the world has ever known, and that fruit will be the fruit of peace. Isaiah paints a vivid picture of the fruit of the Messiah's reign of peace.

What does this sound like to you? Like the curse is gone, like the garden paradise is restored. This is the condition of the earth before the fall before sin brought a curse on all creation. Before the fall every living creature lived on the plants of the earth (Genesis 1:30).

This picture declares things are different now. There is a new sheriff in town. The world is under new management, nothing is going to be the same old, same old. The transformation of the new kingdom will impact all of nature.

It's shocking. When a wolf looks at a lamb, he sees lunch. When a lion looks at a calf, he sees dinner. And what mother would ever let her toddler crawl around a cobra's nest? Mommy, look at this cute snake, can I keep it as a pet?

Can you imagine a world where there is no cause for alarm or fear or harm while walking through all the cages at a zoo, or through a jungle? No harm or fear of spiders, snakes, mice, rats, lions, tigers, and bears? No oh my?

It is hard enough to picture a little lad leading lambs, goats, and calves, but also wolves, leopards, and lions? What kind of world is this? Our world knows nothing of this, no government on earth has ushered in or maintain this kind of peace and harmony.

We can barely handle a democrat and a republican in the same room, or a vaxxer and anti-vaxxer. We can't get along with masks and no masks, where is our peace?

Where has the Messianic kingdom broken into our world and into our hearts, where is the visible evidence of it? Where is the evidence of the transforming power of the Prince of Peace in our conversations and relationships? Are we part of sowing peace or sowing discord and division?

Brothers and sisters, Jesus means for this kind of peace to be real in our lives, not just something we sing about this time of year.

“Peace on the earth, goodwill to men.”

“Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”

“What heights of love, what depths of peace, When fears are stilled, when strivings cease.”

Verse 9 is the powerful summary of verses 6-9. When you pray “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” this is what answer looks like, this is the end game. The earth will become the Messiah's home turf in a way that all creatures, from the least to the fiercest will do His will and His bidding.

This is a description of the new heavens and the new earth when Jesus comes again in the fulness of His glory. But Isaiah is not just telling us *when* it will come. Isaiah is telling us *who* will bring this peace. *When* this peace happens depends on when we embrace the Gospel.

This peace is only as far away as Jesus is. All that stands between us and His peace is our surrendering to Him and opening ourselves up to the Spirit of the Lord. This peace is not just pie in the sky, it is not just when Jesus comes back. It starts in the incarnation.

Jesus comes as the Prince of Peace.

Ephesians 2:14-17 For *he himself is our peace*, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ... 17 he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Where is peace missing in our lives and in our homes and in our community? Where is there a lack of peace in our hearts and our relationships? Where is fellowship broken? Where is Christ breaking down the walls of hostility, strife, division?

Are there Christian brothers and sisters you are out of fellowship with, who you aren't speaking to, who you avoid? Are there co-workers, church members, parents and teenagers who need this kind of peace from Jesus?

What about between husbands and wives? Is there peace? If the leopard can lie down with the goat because of Christ, surely husbands and wives can find peace in Christ, in being Christ like.

What about in our community, in our schools? Is there peace, is someone pursuing peace, making peace, being the peace of Christ? Who is being Christ like? Who is being Christian?

If Christ makes peace with us who are a great offense to Him because of our sin, then how can we not forgive one another. When Jesus has removed the greatest dividing wall of hostility there ever was, how can we harbor anger and resentment over much smaller things.

Only by the power of the Holy Spirit are we able to lay aside our sinfulness, our depravity, our wicked desires, intentions, and actions. Only by the Spirit are we able to lay aside anger, malice, hate, hurtful words, and actions.

Psalm 34:14 Seek peace and pursue it.

Romans 12:16, 18 Live in harmony with one another. ... 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Hebrews 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Conclusion and application.

This is a picture of the glorious Messianic kingdom that is inaugurated when a shoot from the stump of Jesse appears on earth at the incarnation. This is what it will look like when it comes to maturity and completion.

Out of the most humble of beginnings has come the most glorious King and kingdom the world has ever seen.

True knowledge of God, true knowledge of the revelation of God in Christ and in His Gospel will relieve every burden and free us from every fear and anxiety How? When our delight is in the fear of the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, forgive us for our impatience with you and your timing and for despising small things, seemingly insignificant things and failing to see your hand in all things. Free us from all fear, especially the fear of man, and instill in us a deep fear of God. Grant us your peace, a peace not like the world gives, a peace that passes all understanding.