

Isaiah 11:1-10
“From a Stump to a Life-giving Tree”
Advent Midweek 2

December 9, 2020
First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

This evening, we continue our look back to Christ’s First Advent that began as a humble beginning as God became flesh for us in the Person of Jesus Christ and we look forward to His Second Advent, when He will come again in all glory!

Throughout this season of Advent, we prepare for Christ’s coming. The good news is that Christ does not require any works of ours for us to be prepared. All He requires is that we have faith in Him – even the littlest of faith.

We prepare by trusting in His Word and promise knowing that through His saving work, we, by grace through faith in Him, partake in His victory over the powers of sin, death, and Satan. This He accomplished for us through His atoning death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

Now, Advent is also a penitential season, so during this season, we focus on how we can be better followers of Christ, since we do not always fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Instead, we often lack trust in God and worry about tomorrow. So, for every season and in particular this season, we repent of those sins of thought, word, and deed against God our Father and receive the forgiveness that He alone can give. He alone gives us comfort.

Advent is also a time for holy hope and joy. This is a hopeful season and a joyous season!

But as much we prepare, this Advent season is not about us. Advent is actually about God’s activity for us. As humans, we seek signs and wisdom, but God does the absurd. He reconciles us in a way that we would never expect. As we wait, Christ comes to us this day as we are comforted by Him in His Word that endures forever!

[The Kingdoms Would Fall Due to Disobedience to God]

In our Old Testament reading, Isaiah tells us of the Messiah's comings, His First and Second Advents. But he tells this through a prophetic warning. He tells Judah that due to their unfaithfulness to God, they would be reduced to nothing. He tells Judah that all that would remain of this glorious kingdom would be a stump.

The line of kings descended from David has lasted for about 400 years. But it would be cut off. Due to their unfaithfulness and disobedience to God, God would allow Assyria to defeat the northern kingdom of Israel and Babylon to defeat the southern kingdom of Judah. Now, the physical line of descendants would continue, but they were no longer be reigning as kings. This once royal line became reduced to a bunch of seemingly nobodies. This all came to pass some 100 years after Isaiah's prophecy. Then other powers ruled over the Jews, such as Persia and Rome. The royal line of kings was over. All that would remain would be a dead stump.

But from this seemingly dead stump would come hope. Despite the unrighteousness of God's people, God would remain faithful. God would cause new growth out of this stump.

[When All Is Hopeless, We Have Certain Hope]

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1).

So, out of what looks like a dead stump will come a new and living shoot. This will be small at first, barely noticeable and seemingly insignificant, but this shoot would rise up and become a fruitful tree!

Now, this shoot comes from the stump of Jesse. So, who was Jesse? Jesse isn't mentioned much in the Bible. He is an obscure figure. Now, there may be little known about Jesse, but he is significant. He is in fact the father of King David and the Davidic line of kings.

But this line of kings will be reduced to nothing but a stump. They will have no more power and no more influence. The Jewish people will be ruled by their enemies.

When all seems hopeless, Isaiah tells of the sure and certain hope. From this barely noticeable shoot would come fruit. From this barely noticeable shoot would come the Messiah, the King of Kings.

From what looked like a dead stump, through this shoot, God the Father would bring the restoration and revival of the royal line of David through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

This shoot would come from the dead stump of Jesse and be born of a virgin. These references emphasize the power of God to perform a miracle – a humble entrance of Christ into the world.

From our human reason, this seems absurd, but God does not work in a way that we would expect. The Messiah would be a child, a shoot. He would come by the miracle of a virgin birth and would come from the dead stump of the royal line of David. The Messiah would not be born in a palace, but in a manger. He would not be born in the big city of Jerusalem, but born in the small town of Bethlehem – the hometown of Jesse and David.

Yet from this insignificant beginning, great and mighty wonders would come. This shoot would succeed where other kings and leaders have failed. This shoot that would turn into a branch would succeed. He is the perfect ruler and judge because God's own Spirit rests upon Him. The Spirit of the Lord rests on Him and gives Him everything He needs to rule.

This shoot would judge the way God ordains, and not the way the sinful world ordains. He judges with righteousness and equity. ***“Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness shall be the belt of his loins”*** (Isaiah 11:5). This shoot is held together by righteousness, faithfulness, and truthfulness.

As our reading from Isaiah concludes, we hear that this shoot from Jesse is also the root of Jesse. What does this mean? It means that Jesus is in fact the origin of the whole Davidic line. He is the origin of Jesse, himself. This is the mystery of the Person of Christ as He is both true God and true man. Jesus is a descendant of Jesse, but He is also Jesse's Lord.

Jesus came to bring us peace with God the Father. This He accomplished by obeying the Father's will for us through His perfect life, His atoning suffering and death, and His resurrection from the dead.

Jesus came to restore us back to peace for which we receive all by grace through faith in Him.

[Where is Peace?]

But we look around today, and we think, where is this peace? If peace is restored, why is there conflict? We see injustice. There is war and famine. We have families in conflict. Whenever we watch the news, we see that there is no peace.

But in fact, we do have peace! We have the peace that this world cannot comprehend. This is the peace between God and man. Through Jesus Christ, we have forgiveness of sins, which means we are at perfect peace with God the Father.

As Christians, we are to spread this peace to others who are lacking peace. Where we are at conflict with others, remember the peace we have in Christ, and spread that peace to others, as we forgive our neighbors. And where you see conflict among others, share with them the peace that you have in Christ.

[Peace on Earth at Christ's Coming]

Our reading from Isaiah also tells us of what seems to be absurd: predators and prey at peace. He tells of the wolf dwelling with the lamb, the leopard and the young goat, the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear, the lion and the ox, and the nursing child playing over the hole of the cobra.

In verses six through eight, we hear of animals that would normally eat each other, but they are now relaxing and eating together. A leopard stretches and takes a nap next to a goat, rather than crouching to attack. A wolf no longer snarls and prowls around a lamb, instead they are best friends as they play together. A child will find a snake to play with, laughing at the sound of the rattle it makes. The snake enjoys the laughter and company of the child. No harm, no danger, no threat.

Peace on earth. This picture is beautiful. The weakest and most vulnerable will be safe and secure. No one will get hurt. No one will be in harm's way. No more injustice. No more enemies. No more war. No more fear from viruses and diseases. No more political conflicts. Everyone is living together in harmony and peace.

This is the peace that Christ will bring with His Second Advent. This is perfect peace.

As Christ restored us to peace with God the Father during His First Advent, He will restore all of creation at His Second Advent. He will come descending from the clouds to judge the living and the dead.

You see, sin is not just a human issue, it is a cosmic issue. Sin effects everything. When Adam and Eve were deceived by Satan and ate of the forbidden fruit, they corrupted not just humanity, but they corrupted all of creation. So, when Christ comes, He will reconcile all creation and make all things right. For us, in Christ, we have nothing to fear, since Christ's peaceable kingdom will include forgiven sinners like you and me! There will be no more sin to lead us astray, and no more disease or death. We will only have life and peace and the knowledge of God.

“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for all the peoples – of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10).

Isaiah points us to Jesus as the fulfillment of his prophecy. Jesus is the shoot from the stump of Jesse, the shoot springing up from what looked like the dead stump of the Davidic line. This shoot would bear His fruits for all peoples as He was nailed upon the cross and suffered and died for us. There He stood as the signal for all peoples that by faith in Him we have salvation! Jesus is the one who brings life from death! From the cross and tomb, our Lord and Savior arises to bring us life!

Jesus has come as the Messiah for all peoples! He has turned the stump of Jesse into the life-giving tree, so that whoever believes in Him and trusts in His promises shall receive the fruits of His cross: forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation!

Through an insignificant living shoot from the stump of Jesse to the life-giving tree of the cross, God has accomplished salvation for us! It is all by grace through faith in Christ alone, that we now have restoration and peace as we joyfully await His coming! Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠