

Isaiah 11:1-10

¹A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse,
and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit.

²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him:
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³He will be delighted with the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
nor will he render decisions based on what he hears with his ears,
⁴but with righteousness he will judge the poor,
and he will render fair decisions in favor of the oppressed on the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath from his lips he will put the wicked to death.

⁵Righteousness will be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his hips.

⁶The wolf will dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together,
and a little child will lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear will graze together,
and their young ones will lie down together.
The lion will eat straw like the cattle.

⁸The nursing child will play near a cobra's hole,
and the weaned child will put his hand into a viper's den.

⁹They will not hurt or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰This is what will take place on that day. The peoples will seek the Root of Jesse, who
will be standing like a banner for the peoples, and his resting place will be glorious.

From the Root

I.

Get to the root of it. That's what Christians think and do when this lesson from Isaiah is read around Advent or Christmas. It's the "good parts" of the lesson that are concentrated on immediately; after all, that's what we're here in Isaiah to see, right?

Today, before we get to the root of it, let's spend some time on the other things we find in this lesson, like maybe judgment. "He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, nor will he render decisions based on what he hears with his ears..."⁴ He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath from his lips he will put the wicked to death" (Isaiah 11:3-4, EHV).

There is a day of reckoning. A price simply *must* be paid. Poor Adam and Eve get brought up frequently. Adam's covetous yearning to be like God manifested itself when he didn't stop Eve from following a dangerous path. Eve's covetous yearning is even easier to see—her arm stretches out to take the fruit and bring it to her lips.

The results? Pain in childbirth. Thorns and thistles, which hadn't been seen in Eden, sprang out of the earth to make growing and harvesting food more difficult. Work became difficult—instead of pure joy in work there is frustration and pain and sweat. Last of all—most serious of all—death is something that cannot be avoided, no matter how far humanity believes it has come or will progress.

Paul talks about it this way: “Creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it...”²²For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time” (Romans 8:20, 22, EHV). Creation itself is subject to futility because sin polluted the world.

The perfect universe God created is damaged goods because of sin. Not even the most remote corners of nature can escape sin's consequences. Watch any nature show and you will see it. There is a struggle to survive. Creatures are either predators or prey. Prey must struggle to escape—run faster, jump higher, hide better, sit really, really still so you aren't spotted by the enemy. Predators have to work to run down the prey, or see through the camouflage or the stillness to obtain the prize.

II.

The futility and groaning of creation seen in nature should tip us off. It isn't just the thorns and thistles that make it hard for farmers to grow crops; it isn't just the pain of childbirth or the sweat and frustration of earning a living.

The Devil keeps setting the same kinds of snares he set in Eden. “Be like God. Take control of your own life.” “Everyone else *owes* you—take what you think you need.” The Devil has cultivated the thorns and thistles of the world. He fills the culture with entertainment coming from your streaming services that normalizes all kinds of godless actions and attitudes. The more you watch, the more he sucks you in; and the easier it becomes to set the snares. Do what you want sexually. Cheat wherever you find it necessary. Look at whatever you want. Speak in whatever way you want. Do whatever it takes to get *your* desired results without regard for anyone else.

Just as the Devil's snares continue to work today among God's people, so also they worked back in the times of Old Testament Israel and Judah. Judah forsook God and went their own way. So far did they fall that God allowed Judah to be decimated, like a forest that has been clear-cut. Nothing remained but a forest of stumps. One of the stumps in the empty forest was the kingly line of David.

III.

All the stumps lay dead and dormant. For 500 years that forest remained lifeless. There seemed to be no hope.

Such impossible situations are God's favorite places to take bold action. “A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1, EHV). Even when God begins his process, it seems underwhelming. Just a little shoot coming up from the stump. A Baby, born to an insignificant member of the tribe of Judah from the house of David who was pledged to be married to another insignificant member of the tribe of Judah from the house of David.

He was born. “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people” (Luke 2:52, EHV). Isaiah puts it this way: “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isaiah 11:2, EHV). God became man while remaining God.

Every day of his earthly life Jesus faced severe temptations. The Devil knew that if he

defeated Jesus your salvation and mine would be lost. There was one period of temptation that was especially intense. Jesus finally said to the Devil: “Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only” (Matthew 4:10, EHV).

The God-man did what no human had been able to achieve—he sent the Devil packing. Having remained perfect throughout his life, the God-man was in the perfect position to offer himself as the sacrifice without defect or blemish for all the sins of the world—from Adam and Eve to you and me.

IV.

This is the Savior for whom we prepare our hearts in Advent. The One who did it all.

This is the One who is going to judge. “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD... ⁴ with righteousness he will judge the poor, and he will render fair decisions in favor of the oppressed” (Isaiah 11:2, 4, EHV).

The Spirit rests on him—a perfect Spirit. *His* righteousness overwhelms our worldly attitudes and sins. His Spirit of wisdom and understanding replaces our foolishness and idiocy. His Spirit of counsel and might overpowers our deception and weakness. His Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord conquers our ignorance and impenitence.

Before this Judge you stand. Though you are guilty, for your sake he takes the blame. On your behalf the rod of punishment leaves welts on his back. His fairness is based on the righteousness he took off himself and wrapped around you. Your tattered rags of infidelity and unrighteousness he ties around himself. *You* become what *he* is, he becomes what you are. All the good he has is yours and the bad you have becomes his.

In this Great Exchange he is the Lamb, pure and holy, who makes you lambs of his Father’s flock. You are all precious in God’s sight—young and old, rich and poor, male and female—all are one in Christ Jesus.

This is the One. Because of him “The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together, and a little child will lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear will graze together, and their young ones will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the cattle. ⁸The nursing child will play near a cobra’s hole, and the weaned child will put his hand into a viper’s den” (Isaiah 11:6-8, EHV). All the creation that was groaning will have been repaired. All the sorrow will be gone.

“The peoples will seek the Root of Jesse, who will be standing like a banner for the peoples, and his resting place will be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10, EHV).

Welcome the King. He has done it all. The resting place he has prepared will be glorious. From the Root came the King. He has given you your place in God’s family. His Advent has won it all for you. Amen.