

Sermon: The One Isaiah 11:1-9

This Advent season we have been studying selected passages in Isaiah.

And this morning we will consider Isaiah chapter 11. Isaiah is a difficult book because it is long and complex. Yet it is also beautiful and it offers us clear pictures of the Messiah from an Old Testament perspective.

During Advent season, we remember that Christ has come and is coming again. We await his second Advent when everything will finally be put right. Because, as we are all keenly aware, things are not as they should be.

In scripture and in our own experience, plagues are a reminder that things are not as they should be. And regarding governments, there are many threats to lasting peace. This is always the case.

If only there was a leader who could rise above it all. One who was wise, just, capable and powerful.

If only we had a good king who could establish a good kingdom. And wouldn't it be wonderful if he could heal relationships, heal diseases and repair us from all of our sin?

The bible tells us that we do have such a king and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ** is a Greek word which means **anointed**.

The Hebrew term is Messiah.

And the idea behind the term "**Christ**" or "**Messiah**" is that Jesus is the Anointed One of God.

Which means all of the blessing of God has been poured out him.

Because he anointed by God with all of His blessing, he can carry out the tasks to which he is called.

And we need someone so blessed.

Because if world history teaches us anything, it's that only God can effect lasting change.

Our personal problems and the world's problems are so great, only God can save us.

Too often in the church today, we conceive of Jesus merely as a personal savior.

Yet the picture we have of Jesus from the Bible is one where he makes all things new.

He's coming to establish a new heavens and a new earth.

He brings a new creation.

He's a king and he brings a new kingdom.

One that no rival can stand against.

Isaiah 11 tells us about the coming king and what the effects of his rule will be.

And so, let us read Isaiah 11 verses 1-9 and study the Messiah and his rule.

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

**2** And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

**3** And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

**4** but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

**5** Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

**Isaiah 11:6** The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

**7** The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

**8** The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

**9** They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

***This is God's word.***

***The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever.***

In both literature and movies, there is a recurring theme of "the one."

The one is a person who has been long hoped for- often prophesied about- who can save the world from destruction.

We see this image of the one often in fantasy stories like **Harry Potter** or in the **Matrix**.

There, the likeness to Christ is unmistakable.

I remember watching the Matrix for the first time in the movie theaters with a friend.

And when Neo was killed, I thought, he's going to get back up.

He has to. He's "The One."

In C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia, the character Aslan is hardly ambiguous as a Christ like figure.

In Tolkein's Lord of the Rings books, the Christ figure is split among three characters.

There's the prophet Gandalf who is a wizard.

A priest, Frodo, who bears the ring all the way to the altar of Mt. Doom.

And then there is the king, Aragorn who comes from the right lineage and has been long prophesied about.

In all these works of modern storytelling, The One (or ones) save the world from destruction.

And they are able to do this because either they have the right lineage, they were born for this purpose or because they have just always been.

Yet there is no "One" in literature or movies like the real "One" in the Bible.

In Isaiah 11, we have glimpse of "**the One's**" lineage, his ability and his performance- and all of this comes in the form of prophecy.

You have a sermon outline and the first point there is...

I. The Messiah's Lineage (1)

In verse 1 we are told that **“a shoot shall come forth from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”**

Now, to understand the significance of this passage, we need to see the context in which it lies.

And, as a caveat- this context is what makes the book of Isaiah so difficult. Isaiah is filled with geopolitical references, alliances and threats that are all a bit hard to keep in mind. Sometimes the commentators aren't exactly sure who Isaiah is speaking about or what date the prophecies refer to. And so, Isaiah can sometimes read like the international news section of a paper from 1893. Many of the names are unfamiliar to us now. Yet, unlike the newspaper from 1893, we know that all of the prophecies and promises are ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

And so, as we study the beautiful prophecies that clearly refer to Jesus, we need to provide at least a little of the context current to that day.

So, in verse one, the “stump of Jesse” is mentioned. And this refers to the monarchy of the house of King David that has been cut down by military defeat.

This defeat will be total and at this point, it has not happened yet. Isaiah prophesied these verses somewhere around 725 BC and Judah was defeated and forced into exile in 587 BC. And so Isaiah's prophecy about this crushing defeat is over 100 years away. Yet no one at that time knew when that defeat would finally come.

All that is clear is that both Israel and Judah will be defeated and scattered. And comparatively, they get off easy compared to the nations who defeated them. Because Assyria and Babylon will be utterly annihilated. Yet Israel and Judah will continue on because of the grace of God.

So, after the humiliation of Judah, which is over 100 years away, the house of David will be reduced to a stump. It's a cut down tree.

Now this in itself is a shock. And the reason it is a shock is because of God's Covenant with David all the way back in 2 Samuel. There, in 2 Samuel 7:12, the Lord made this covenant with David:  
**12** When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom **forever**. ... **16** ... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure **forever** before me. Your throne shall be established **forever**.”

So there it is, three times the Lord promised David that his throne and kingdom would be established forever.

And in light of this promise, Isaiah 11 makes more sense. Because the Stump of Jesse refers to David's royal house.

David was the son of Jesse. And to the shock of every Jew in that day, the monarchy of David's lineage was cut down. Jerusalem was overrun and the people were exiled.

This is the destruction that Isaiah prophesied about in the first 10 chapters of his book. And even though the monarchy is cut down, the tree is not finally dead. There is still life in the roots. **“A shoot shall come forth from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”**

Normally when we look at a tree that has been cut down, we consider it dead and finished. Let the rotting will begin. And so it should have been for the house of David- just like it was for the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Yet, because of God's covenant promise and his purpose of grace, David's monarchy will grow back.

The application for us is simply this- never bet against God's promises and his purpose of Grace. He will fulfill his promises. Even though all may seem lost. Even though the tree is cut down to a stump, God will fulfill his promises. And this especially true of his promise to save us.

I love the way Peter phased it when he defended the Gospel before the rulers and elders in Jerusalem in Acts 4. He said, referring to Jesus:  
**Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**”

Not **will** be saved or **can** be saved, but **must** be saved. If we are in Christ by faith, then we **must** be saved. God cannot go back on his word. He promised to save us if we have faith in Christ and so we **must** be saved.

In the same way, because of God's covenant promise to David, the Stump has to produce a shoot or branch. It just can die altogether... because God has promised.

But what is that branch going to be like and how will his reign be different from all the rest who have come before him?

This question leads us to our next point...

## II. The Messiah's Strength & Character (2-5)

In verse 2 Isaiah tells us that the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon this branch. And this is packed with meaning. Because the Spirit of the Lord is where the Messiah derives his power. He is not strong in his own might but rather is capable because God has equipped him by his Spirit. And the Spirit does not merely rush upon him in a “come-and-go” fashion as Hes did with King Saul or with Samson before him. No, the Spirit **rests** upon him and does not depart.

And this shows us the significance of Jesus' experience after his baptism.

In Matthew 3:16, we read:

**Matthew 3:16** And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him...

We might have thought that just because Jesus is God in the flesh, he can do his ministry in his own power. But we know that God equipped Jesus by his Spirit and that Jesus was continually dependent upon God by the Spirit.

This is why Jesus prayed.

He didn't do things according to his own will or power. He is the perfect man and this means that he was perfectly dependent upon God.

Now, because he has God's spirit and walks perfectly in line with the Spirit, he has wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

He is perfectly equipped to be the best leader possible. He's the type of leader we can only dream of.

Can you even imagine the stresses and temptations that leaders of nations face.

Here they are, endowed with so much power and responsibility and yet with such limited wisdom.

They can't understand all the sides of an issue, no matter how hard they try.

They have counsellors who have vested interests and petty grievances.

And they always seem to have certain loyalties that run counter to what is best for the people they govern.

But not the Messiah.

He has God's Spirit resting on Him.

And so he sees through every issue to the heart of the matter.

He has the best counsel because he is exhaustively informed.

And he has the Spirit of might which means he has the ability to implement his policies and see them through.

Think of how president Bush couldn't make sure the 2008 stimulus funds went to the right people.

Think of how president Obama couldn't make sure the Healthcare website worked well before it went online.

Think of how Angela Merkel couldn't keep some disingenuous refugees from exploiting the government's financial aid.

Think of how president Trump couldn't get the wall built that he promised.

Every government leader fails in important ways because they don't have the wisdom they need and they lack the power to implement their policies.

Yet Jesus has all of the wisdom and power of God by His Spirit.

But not only does Messiah have all wisdom and ability. He also has "the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" which means that he has a perfect relationship with God.

He fears the Lord which means that pleasing God is his highest aim all the time.

His motives are transparent and pure.

He doesn't engage in the political machinations that run through every administration.

He never gives kickbacks to the rich and powerful so that they will help him succeed.

No. In all of his dealings he is governed by the fear of the Lord.

God's greatest glory is his highest aim.

The Messiah has the best qualifications to lead and because of this, his performance as a leader is peerless in world history.

In verses 3-4, we read of His absolute justice.

**3** And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, **4** but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

He's never unjust. He's always fair.

He doesn't judge according to appearances, but he sees to the bottom of things.

He doesn't take the side of the rich and exploit the poor- which is most often the case in worldly governments.

Instead, he decides with equity for the meek of the earth and he renders judgment upon the wicked.

He's a perfect ruler.

Don't you find yourself hungering for perfect leadership. Some of us come from countries where, at any given time, half the nation or more has little to no faith in the leaders doing the right thing.

Don't you just hunger for a leader who is supremely wise, perfectly honest, completely capable and always just?

***5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.***

This is the king that God promises in his Messiah.

He is no ordinary man.

He's super human.

He's Immanuel- "God with us."

In Isaiah 9:6-7, the messiah is again promised.

**6** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Only Christ through His perfect divine nature and perfect dependence upon God could ever fulfil this prophecy.

In election years, when faced with the candidates, do you ever find yourself asking the question, "Is this the best we can do?"

And the resounding answer from history is “yes!”  
Because every world leader will disappoint us.  
None of them are up to the task of governing as they should.  
They all make huge mistakes.

And in the midst of these failures, God’s people are called to hope in Christ and Christ alone.  
He alone has the full blessing of God.  
He alone is the anointed one.  
And he alone is able to be the King God desires.

And so what are we to do in light of these verses?  
Well, first, we are to fix our hope on the second Advent of Christ.  
The world’s problems and our personal problems will never finally be solved before he comes.  
And so our expectations of those who govern us ought to be tempered by the acknowledgment that they are merely human.  
We expect our leaders to fail- not because they are more evil than we are but because we know they are no different than we are.  
They are just as sinful.

Christians don’t put their hope in the government.  
We hope in Christ’s perfect government.

And secondly, we should pray for our leaders.  
Pray that they would recognize their smallness before God and their weakness to fulfil their duties.  
Pray that they would see their propensity to be proud and selfish.  
We should pray that they would be humble and seek the Lord for his counsel and help.  
That the importance of their office would drive them to fear the Lord and get on their knees.

We should pray for our leaders as we await the only one who can truly lead us out of darkness.

And this is what Christ does in verses 6-9 which leads us to our final point...

### III. The Messiah’s Results (6-9)

In verses 6-9 we have a picture of what the world will be like under the Messiah’s reign.  
It a world of peace where the rich and powerful no longer exploit the poor and weak.  
It’s pictured in terms of animals no longer feeding on each other.  
Rather they are all so docile and harmless that even a child can play with them.

Now, before we read these verses again, I want to deal with the obvious question that arises from verses 6-9.  
And that is, are these verse literal?  
And the answer is probably.  
But we need to recognize that this image of docile animals is probably foremost a picture of human society under the messiah’s rule- where the powerful genuinely love the weak and the rich genuinely desire to lift the poor.  
Envy, greed and violence no longer reign but rather tranquillity and harmony.

**Isaiah 11:6** The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf

and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. **7** The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. **8** The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. **9** They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Don’t you want to live in a world like this?  
Gone are the days of survival of the fittest.

And it’s the knowledge of the Lord that makes the world this way.  
This knowledge is not primarily mental knowledge but rather a heart-level, right-relationship with God.  
It means being filled with love for God and devotion to him.

Now what leader could ever effect reform so total that even hearts are changed- and not just the hearts of people but also animals?

Only Christ can implement such heart level reforms.  
And he’s able to do this because on Him rests all the Spirit and power of God.  
He’s the one.  
And there is no one else like him.

So do you hunger for his rule?  
Do you look forward to his government?

Jesus said “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.”  
The Messiah’s work has already begun in the hearts of his people.  
We have his Spirit. He’s made us to be peacemakers.  
So, is his work evident in you?  
Are you a peacemaker?  
Do you live like a citizen in his kingdom?  
And do you eagerly await his return?

Paul wrote in Philippians 3:20:

**20** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

So let us fix our hope on his second Advent.  
He is the one we are waiting for.  
And let us seek to live as citizens under his rule until he comes again.  
Amen.