THE WEARY WORLD Rejoices

I.   Introduction to this Study

This week we engage another of Isaiah's prophecies in our series *The Weary World Rejoices*. In highly figurative, poetic language, Isaiah points forward to the first Advent, the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as his Second Coming.

II.   Connecting with One Another

How do you strengthen your hopefulness in hard times?

III.   Study the Text

a.   Though Isaiah 11.1-10 is under our purview this week, let's start by reading 10.24-25, then 33-34. What do you think this Lebanese forest is meant to represent?

b.   In ancient texts like this one, trees are symbolic of a nation. A "tall" and "lofty" forest thus refers to the Assyrian army, who began taking the Northern Kingdom of Israel captive in 722BC.

   What, then, do these verses signify? Whose "side" is God on? Why?

c.   Continue reading Isaiah's prophecy in 11.1.

   Knowing that trees often symbolize nations, how do you understand the phrase "Stump of Jesse"? What could it mean that a shoot will emerge from the stump?

d.   Have there been times in your life where you've felt "cut down" like a "stump"? Did God bring a "shoot" out of that stump? If so, how? Was the "shoot" fruitful?

e.   Read 1st Samuel 16.1-13. Do these verses help you understand Isaiah 11?

   What does it mean for you that "He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears" or that "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"?

f.   We hear a lot about the Psalms of *David* and the *Davidic* line, since *David* was King. But Isaiah states, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse."

   Why do you think Isaiah goes back a generation, describing not a shoot from the stump of David, but rather from the stump of *Jesse*?

   Could Isaiah be trying to make a comparison between David and the coming Messiah? If so, what is it?

g. How do you understand the phrase "from his roots a Branch will bear fruit"?

What is the meaning of the word "fruit"?

Can you think of any passages in the Christian Scriptures that use the word fruit? What is its significance in those passages?

h. Read **Isaiah 11.2-10**.

Hebrew poetry is structured very differently than 21st century American writing. Hebrew authors often employed what is called chiastic structure, where the meaning of the passage is not at the conclusion of a story, but is in the middle!

Here's how one commentator divides up **Isaiah 11.1-10**:

>   A The shoot from Jesse's root (verse 1)
>   B The Spirit of Yahweh rests on him (verse 2)
>   C The fear of Yahweh is his delight (verse 3a)
>   D Yahweh's righteousness and justice (verse 3b–4)
>   C' Righteousness and justice his girdle (verse 5–8)
>   B' Knowledge of Yahweh in all the earth (verse 9)
>   A' The Root of Jesse, a banner to the nations (verse 10)

Reread the central meaning of this passage in verses 3b-4 (starting with "He will not judge"). How would you summarize these verses in your own words?

i. What does it mean for you that God is on the side of the oppressed?

Where do you see this in Jesus' ministry?

Where do you see this in the biblical accounts of the Christmas story?

j. In **Isaiah 11.2**, we see six specific qualities of the Holy Spirit. What are they?

Which of these qualities do you most want the Spirit to work in your life during this Advent season?

k. Where do you see promises of Jesus' second coming in **Isaiah 11.1-10**?

l. Do you think this passage is meant to describe the church now? Or only in the new heavens and new earth? Why?

IV. <u>Pray</u>

a. Lift up the areas of your life that no longer feels "tall and lofty," but rather "cut down like a stump."

b. Pray that God would instill the qualities of the Holy Spirit within you this Advent season.

c. Ask God to reveal ways in which you could increasingly join His work for those who are oppressed.