

# Good News of Great Joy

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Isaiah 11.1-10

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## I. Connecting With One Another

What is your favorite Christmas carol? Why?

## II. Introduction to this Study

This week we are engaging another of Isaiah's prophecies regarding the coming Messiah. In highly figurative, poetic language, Isaiah points forward to the first Advent, the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as his Second Coming.

## III. Study the Text

- a. Recall that the Scriptures were not written with the included chapter and verse we are used to today. These were added to the biblical books much later so that we could more easily reference particular passages.

As such, though Isaiah 11.1-10 is under our purview this week, let's start in chapter 10. Read Isaiah 10.33-34. What do you think this Lebanese forest is meant to represent?

- b. Commentators note that trees are often symbolic of a nation. As such, a "tall" and "lofty" forest in this case refers to the Assyrian army, who began taking the Northern Kingdom captive in 722, with the capital city of Samaria falling in 722BC.

What, then, do these verses signify? Whose "side" is God on? Those taking others captive or those being taken captive?

- c. Continue reading Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 11, verse 1. Again, knowing that trees often symbolize nations, how do you understand the phrase, "Stump of Jesse"? What could it mean that a singular shoot will emerge from the stump?

- d. Read 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16.1-13. Do these verses help you understand Isaiah 11?

Recall that Isaiah states, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse." We hear a lot about the Psalms of *David* and the *Davidic* line, since *David* was King. Why, then, do you think Isaiah goes back one more generation, describing not a shoot from the stump of David, but rather from the stump of *Jesse*? For a hint, reread 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16.1-13, noticing the phrases used for David. Could Isaiah be trying to make a comparison between David and the coming Messiah? If so, what is it?

- e. 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?

- f. Read Isaiah 11.1-10.

Hebrew poetry is structured very differently than modern 21<sup>st</sup> century American poetry and narrative. Hebrew authors often employed what is called chiasm

structure, where the ultimate meaning of the passage is not at – or near – the conclusion of a story. Instead, the meaning is right in the middle! Further, each theme corresponds to another part (for instance, in this passage, verse 1 corresponds with verse 10, 2 with 9, and 3a with 5-8).

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?

How do these words correspond with the passage we read above, 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16.7?

- g. Read Isaiah 11.1-10 one more time. Where do you see promises of Jesus' second coming?

#### IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. What does it mean for you that God is on the side of the oppressed? How do you see this in Jesus' ministry? Do you see this in the biblical accounts of the Christmas story? Do we sing about this in any of our songs? If not, why not!?
- b. 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? Again, how?
- c. 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"?

How is that good news for you today? How is that good news for Christmas?

- d. The Scriptures are clear: God is always on the side of those who are being oppressed or are in need. Materially, most of us are neither oppressed or in need. Take a moment to think, however, how you are poor or in need? How do you think God could meet you in your need this Advent season?

#### V. Pray

- a. Lift up our Session, both Elders and Pastors, who will be deciding on the best denominational home for Good Shepherd this week.
- b. Pray for yourself and those you know to trust in the LORD, and know that he looks at our hearts.
- c. Ask God's Spirit to lead us in true worship of the coming Messiah this Advent season.