

Isaiah 11:1-10. Message with Children's Christmas Service: 2nd Sunday of Advent. Dec. 8, 2013.

1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the belt around his waist. 6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Do you ever feel like giving up hope? Maybe you've gotten cynical through the years: too much tragedy. Maybe you've lost trust: too much evil running rampant in our world. Maybe in a moment of clarity you've seen how much you've contributed to the emotional destruction in our society: responsible for part of the turmoil in the lives of those who matter most to you.

Then you certainly could relate to the people to whom these words of Isaiah were originally addressed. But take heart. This is about hope. This is about hope when *giving up hope* might have seemed like all there was.

Go back all the way in time to the place the children this morning transported us. We can see the terribly sad effects Adam and Eve's action has had on this world. But their sinful grab from this tree (the tree of the knowledge of good & evil) was immediately followed by... God's loving offer. With His Words, God planted hope. From the family tree of Adam and Eve, a Conqueror would arise. He would destroy the devil. The Savior, for us sinful people, would come.

The promise from the Garden was made more specific as time went on. And hope grew in the soil of human hearts among Adam & Eve's children. The Conqueror-Savior would come from Abraham's descendants... out of Judah's tribe... within David's family, David the son of Jesse.

But then, along came this day in Israel's history when Isaiah spoke. You see, Isaiah was given a terrifying glimpse of the future... It was pictured in terms like this: "*The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will lop off the boughs with great power. The Lofty trees will be felled... He will cut [them] down with an ax.*" This graphic imagery was not about trees. The people knew the Lord was capable of bringing down mighty nations. In the past he had done it for their benefit. The way Egypt had been cut down in the Red Sea had been shared from father to child. With chilling clarity, they now understood judgment on the people of Israel

was about to arrive. The “ax,” which the Lord would use for delivering this blow, was: the nation of Assyria. But the Lord had a word for haughty Assyria too: they would be next on the chopping block. And, for the moment, Jerusalem would be spared. This all unfolded in the years just before 700 B.C.

But that was only a little over 100 years before the darkest point arrived: Jerusalem was conquered, and David’s house was chopped down to a stump. A toppled throne. Both rule & kingdom lost. The survivors sparse.

What now? What would come of God’s promise, when Isaiah described the scene as nothing more than a stump remaining? Had God given up on them? (They certainly knew they deserved it. They had turned aside from their loving Lord and prostituted themselves to false gods.) Had hope been cut off? Was giving up hope all there was left? No! God was using events in Israel’s history to draw them back, back to his promise of a Savior from sin.

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse.” **[Begin sketch of pictures: 1st - small shoot from stump.]** God spoke words to rekindle fragile, flickering hope. This was not a hope for restoration of national pride & prominence. This was the hope of souls made right with God... in the only way that they could be... this connects all the way back to the promise in the Garden: from the family tree of Adam & Eve, Abraham, David (the son of Jesse) - the Conqueror of Satan / Savior for sinners would arise.

Where and How would he arrive on the scene? Who in that day would have seen this coming? Not from a palace. The Savior King was born in a barn... in Bethlehem, the hometown of David. “Ah! A shoot from the stump!” **[sketch: 2nd part - show the shoot emerge into the form of a cross.]**

Jesus said:

- John 12:32-33 *“But I, when I am lifted from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”*
- & John 3:14-15 *“The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”*

He wasn’t only lifted up on the cross. He lifted himself up from death. Risen, see him standing victorious outside his own grave. **[sketch: banner, with Jesus image, standing outside grave]** Vs.10 “The Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the people.”

Take a closer look at our champion. **[sketch: sketch belts, 1 on waist – holding 1.]** See his belts just as it is described in this Bible section: *“righteousness” & “faithfulness.”* These are no ordinary belts. I guess I can’t help but think at this point of the belts boxers or wrestlers wear. They aren’t ordinary. They don’t keep pants from falling down. They advertise an identity – Champion! What do Jesus’ belts tell us? He is champion of faithfulness. He is champion of righteousness. And He has righteousness to give!

This is so important, so critical for hearts that are heavy with the guilt of sins present and past, to hear! What our holy God requires in order to enter His Heaven, He gifts to us! And he follows through on His offer! That is what the title “Faithful” means!

Do take note: He is faithful to *all* his promises. That is true for both believers in him, as well as those who reject him. He – in grace – promises: Everyone who believes has eternal life with Him. He – in justice –

warns: Everyone who rejects Him as their Only Hope will be sentenced to the eternal fire of hell. Why? God's Word tells us there is no other way to the joy and peace of eternal life. [pause]

We have been brought to the peace that Isaiah pictures. Already now Jesus gives you, me and all who believe in him a peace that goes way beyond human understanding. Isaiah's words also make us think ahead. How many of you kids like animals? Name your favorite. **[Pick out the wild examples given.]** Can you imagine playing with a wolf, lion or bear? Just walking up to one and not fearing any harm? There is the time coming when those pictures will be the reality we enjoy. When Jesus comes again, he will make a new earth – and there we, with all creation, will enjoy perfect peace.

This Word, before us, is about hope. *“Everything that was written in the past”* –here in the Bible– *“was written to teach us, so that through endurance & the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* *“Again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up... arise to rule... the Gentiles will hope in him.’* – Rom.15:4,12

Hope. Back in High School I listened to a Christmas CD. The refrain of 1 song went:

In the eyes of a child there is joy, there is laughter There is hope, there is trust, a chance to shape
the future For the lessons of life, there is no better teacher Than the look in the eyes of a
child

I liked to hear that song. I think especially “hope” and “future” stood out to me. You hear how the song specifically ties children to these themes. Children are often connected with hope. Whether it is the way children themselves hope, or the hope parents have for their children – for a brighter, better future for them.

But then... as we go along through life, circumstances in life hit where giving up hope might seem like all there is. The future isn't turning out the way we envisioned it. It's easy to get a cynical outlook, or hopeless feeling in the gut... when pain seems like it will never leave you alone, when strife in a relationship persists despite your concentrated effort to make things better, when you're battling to avoid that one sin that gets you so often & the guilt keeps crashing over you in waves.

No matter how bad circumstances get, no matter how dark the future seems, look into the eyes of the Christ child: Jesus. Wherever Jesus is, there is hope. He has come. He has healing: peace for guilty consciences. He has an eternity of peace in store for all who place their hope of salvation in him. So... continue to hope in him!