

Sunday, December 15, 2024 | Sounds of the Season

Week 3 | Isaiah 11:1-11 | "Emancipation"

"Sounds of the Season" is a four-week holiday series designed to help us delve deeper into the true meaning of Christmas. Each week, we'll focus on a key aspect of the Christmas story: visitation, invitation, emancipation, and redemption. We'll examine a passage of Scripture and illustrate that Sunday's topic with a well-known Christmas carol, helping us connect with the message in a more meaningful way.

In week one, Pastor Bob started this series by exploring the Christmas concept of visitation and how the God of the universe came and visited us via his Son, Jesus Christ. This is what the Carol, *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* is all about:

*Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel*

At his birth, the Lord was called "Immanuel," which means "God with us." This means the true meaning of Christmas isn't presents but the presence of God.

Last week, we talked about the Christmas principle of invitation. The night Jesus was born, the angels did not appear to the High Priest, Herod Antipas, or Caesar, but to humble shepherds. Immediately, those shepherds went and found Jesus. Then, those same men went and told others what they had heard and seen. Likewise, we ought to follow in their footsteps this holiday season. Or, as the Carol puts it,

*Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born*

As God's ambassadors, we've been sent to bring the Good News to people far and wide. There is no better way to celebrate Christmas than inviting someone to know Jesus Christ.

READ: Isaiah 11:1-11 (ESV)

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.

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.

⁹They 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.

¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. By this point, the US had been embroiled in a three-year civil war. The decree declared "that all persons held as slaves are, and henceforward shall be free." Union forces would have to win the war for this declaration to take root, but it was a positive step in the right direction for the US. However, as Juneteenth commemorates, it would take another two long years before all slaves heard the good news.

Likewise, the Christmas story is about slaves being freed. But, as was the case in 1863, only some know about the good news today. And as Steve Bateman puts it in his article about Juneteenth, "Good news delayed is good news denied."¹ This is why we talked about the concept of invitation last week and why we must discuss the idea of emancipation today. Part of our Christmas invitation is the fact that Jesus Christ has emancipated humanity from the bondage of sin and death.

Historical background?

Date—Isaiah started his career as a prophet in 740 BC and lived long enough to record the death of the Assyrian King, Sennacherib, in 681 BC.

Setting—Israel was a divided kingdom: the northern kingdom, called Israel, and the southern kingdom, called Judah. Isaiah was a prophet in Judah. He lived during the reigns of four Judean kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was alive when Sennacherib invaded the northern kingdom and took it captive in 701.

Context?

Purpose – The children of Judah have “despised the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 1:2-4). Though they are very religious, sacrificing often, their hearts are far from God. And the

¹ Bateman, Steve, “‘Been So Long Praying’: 4 Reasons Why I Observe Juneteenth,” June 19, 2024, The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-observe-juneteenth/>, [accessed, December 14, 2024].

evidence God gives is their unwillingness to help the marginalized—i.e., the poor, widows, weak, sick, etc. (cf. Isa. 1:10-20). So, Isaiah calls them to repentance as God's judgment is about to fall.

A big problem for the widespread immorality in Judah is that the leaders, particularly the kings, were not godly men. Because of this, the people became idolatrous, and instead of receiving God's blessing, they received his judgment.

Though the first five chapters are quite bleak, the next twenty or so are hopeful. Though Judah will come under condemnation and be forced to serve foreign powers, God will be faithful and longsuffering and restore the nation to its former glory under the Messiah. As the ESV puts it, "The book of Isaiah is a vision of hope for sinners through the coming Messiah, promising for the "ransomed" people of God a new world where sin and sorrow will be forever forgotten (cf. 35:10: 51:11)."²

Type of literature? This is a **prophetic** work written as **poetry**, utilizing **figurative** language from start to finish. There's hardly anything by way of a narrative. It's best considered an **anthology**—i.e., a collection of individual works written to distinct groups, sometimes at different times, for varying purposes.

I want you to notice **two** things:

i. Vs. 1-5 – A tree stump **sprouts** a branch and becomes **fruitful**.

Isaiah says, "a shoot" will come "from the stump of Jesse," and from the "roots" of Jesse's stump, "a branch...shall bear fruit." This is **metaphorical** terminology. Isaiah isn't talking about an actual shoot and branch but a figurative shoot and branch, **one that represents a person**. And we know this because verse two says, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon *him* [emphasis added]" and not "it." And "the Spirit of the Lord" will "rest," that is to say, abide, dwell, live, on a man. Thus, a "shoot/root of Jesse" literally means a "man of Jesse," which is to say, **a descendant of Jesse**. And looking back at the OT, we find that the "Jesse" being referred to here had many decedents, one of whom slayed a Giant named Goliath and, eventually, became King of Israel: David (cf. 1 Sam. 16:1). So, whoever this stump-branch-man is, he is in the lineage of kings.

Not only is this person described as someone on whom "the Spirit of the Lord" inhabits, but also "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, [and] the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." This is **not** to say there are different spirits—i.e., one of

² ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton, IL; Crossway, 2016), p. 1235.

wisdom/understanding, the other of counsel/might, another of knowledge/the fear of the Lord. Instead, this what is referred to as **poetic parallelism**. All those descriptions describe the same Spirit, aka the “Spirit of the Lord.” In other words, “the Spirit of the Lord” is one of “wisdom,” “understanding,” “counsel,” “might,” “knowledge,” and “the fear of the Lord.” And whoever this shoot-branch-man is, they will have that Spirit living in him.

Finally, in describing this root of Jesse, he says, “his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.” This shoot-branch-man is the epitome of Proverbs 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Rather than be a fool, he will be one whose ultimate joy and pleasure is the “fear of the Lord,” which is to say, the reverence of God. This man will be one whose chief concern is allegiance and obeisance of God.

Isaiah further describes the root of Jesse as one who will “not judge by what his eyes see or decide disputes by what his ears hear.” In other words, he will not make decisions based on appearances or hearsay. On the contrary, he will adjudicate “with righteousness...and with equity” on behalf of the “poor” and “the meek of the earth.” The helpless, the weak, the vulnerable will find justice at the hands of this shoot-branch-man of Jesse. Consequently, this means he will “strike the earth” and “kill the wicked,” but he will not do this with weapons of warfare but “with the rod of his mouth” and “with the breath of his lips.” He will exact judgment on sinners with speech, not the sword.

Lastly, Isaiah describes the fashion of this branch of Jesse. Though descended from kings, he will not be draped in royal robes; instead, he'll be belted with “righteousness” and “faithfulness.” In other words, this man will be richly adorned by integrity and loyalty. He is a man of character and one you can trust.

So, we're led to ask, “Who is this man that Isaiah referring to?” Jesus Christ. And we know this for five reasons:

First, his genealogy reveals that the Lord was a descendant of Jesse (cf. Lu. 3:32).

Second, in his first sermon, the Lord quoted from a passage in the book of Isaiah:

READ: Luke 4:15-21 (ESV)

¹⁸ “**The Spirit of the Lord** is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The Lord was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

Third, Jesus delighted in the Father's will. Speaking about God the Father, the Lord said, "And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (Jn. 8:29).

Fourth, Jesus was the embodiment of God's wisdom. He said in Jn. 5:30, "As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me." As the character described by Isaiah, the Lord was not one who judged according to appearances or hearsay but according to the "will of him who sent" him.

Lastly, the Lord did not hang out with the wicked but the humble. Calling them to repentance, Jesus ate with sinners (cf. Matt. 9:10-17). Also, he did not use violence against his opponents, but he did use the "rod of his mouth" and "with the breath of his lips." He silenced his adversaries with arguments, not armaments (Cf. Lu. 14:1-6).

ii. Vs. 6-9 – The **predator** lives in **harmony** with the **prey**.

The prophet Isaiah not only described what Jesus Christ would be like but also the kind of era he would inaugurate, one of peace.

Once again, using metaphorical language, Isaiah describes this new era using beings known for their **violence** and beings known for their **vulnerability**: "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."

On the one hand, you've got a "wolf," a "leopard," and "lion," and then, on the other hand, you've got a "lamb," "young goat," and a "fattened calf." These are three groupings that are only seen together at dinner time. Yet, Isaiah says he'll usher in a time where all three will "dwell" and "lie down...together." And the cherry on top is that "a little child shall lead them" all. Arguably, a child is the most vulnerable of them all, even compared to a "lamb," "young goat," and a "fattened calf." Yet, the weakest, most defenseless being on the planet will have no fear and will act as head of the pack.

Then, once again using metaphorical language, Isaiah says that all animals will become vegetarian: "The cow and the bear shall graze....and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Not only that but "their young shall lie down together." Even a "nursing child shall play over the

hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den." All these violent creatures will "not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain." Now, these words are **not** to be interpreted literally. Remember this is poetry. In this passage, Isaiah is using symbolic language to illustrate an overall state of affairs where there will be no more conflict, war, or violence. What the prophet is describing here is a true utopia.

Why? What changed the very fabric of reality? Isaiah says, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." When the shoot-branch-root-of-Jesse-man, aka the Messiah, aka Jesus Christ, arrives reality as we know it will be forever altered because the "knowledge of the Lord" will fill the earth as "waters cover the sea" (cf. Jer. 31:34).

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

The **root** of Jesse, aka Jesus Christ, is the **rallying point** and **resting place** for all people.

The prophet Isaiah says, "In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a *signal* [emphasis added] for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his *resting place* [emphasis added] shall be glorious."

READ: Luke 1:67-75 (ESV)

⁶⁷ And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,
⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and **redeemed** his people
⁶⁹ and has raised up a **horn** of salvation for us in the **house** of his servant David, ⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy **prophets** from of old, ⁷¹ that **we** should be **saved** from our **enemies** and from the hand of all who **hate** us; ⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being **delivered** from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Jesus has come, setting the captives free. As the Christmas carol shows, the Christmas story is an emancipation story.

O Come, O Come, Immanuel

CHOR Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O come, Immanuel,

and ransom captive Israel

that mourns in lonely exile here

until the Son of God appears.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free

Thine own from Satan's tyranny

From depths of Hell Thy people save

And give them victory o'er the grave

VERSE 4

Video Description:

Sounds of the Season | Week 3 | “Emancipation” (Isaiah 11:1-11)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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