

We've just finished our series on Hebrews, and it's only a few weeks now, until Christmas, so it's probably a good opportunity for us to follow the lectionary readings for a bit. Then, when we get into the New Year, we'll start a new series.

So, Today's reading is Isaiah 11, and this morning, I'm going to read it myself.

Isaiah 11:1–16 (ESV)

11 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 YHWH shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of YHWH.

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.

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

¹⁰ In 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.

¹¹ In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time
to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from
Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam,
from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

¹² He will raise a signal for the nations
and will assemble the banished of Israel,
and gather the dispersed of Judah
from the four corners of the earth.

¹³ The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart,
and those who harass Judah shall be cut off;
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,
and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

¹⁴ But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the
Philistines in the west,
and together they shall plunder the people of the east.
They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab,
and the Ammonites shall obey them.
¹⁵ And YHWH will utterly destroy
the tongue of the Sea of Egypt,
and will wave his hand over the River
with his scorching breath,
and strike it into seven channels,
and he will lead people across in sandals.
¹⁶ And there will be a highway from Assyria
for the remnant that remains of his people,
as there was for Israel
when they came up from the land of Egypt.

Righto:

The Date is around about 740 BC.

The prophecies of Isaiah came at a time when his land (and not just his land – the whole region – the whole known world [to them]):

- was in a state of massive upheaval;
- changing alliances;
- world super-powers rising and falling...
- It was a time of great uncertainty.

And that sort of thing happens, when a long-term, stable leader, is replaced. And we know from chapter 6 of Isaiah, it

was in the year that King Uzziah died, that God called and sent Isaiah as a prophet. Now King Uzziah had quite a long reign, and quite a stable reign (King for 52 years).

And in that time, he increased:

- the military strength of Judah;
- fortifications of Judah;
- overcame his enemies
- Judah prospered...

.... But, everything was beginning to change.

Assyria had just emerged as the new world superpower (they had already taken control of Babylon, and they were beginning to subjugate the smaller nations)...

And all was not well at home either. Judah had been prosperous under King Uzziah, but the prosperity wasn't equal. There was a massive wealth divide, between the super-wealthy, and the poor... And as you know, when there is such a massive wealth divide in a land, that doesn't sit well, either way...

Very often, the poor will be taken advantage of and walked over by the rich,,, and also the discontentment of the poor means the masses open to revolution...

And into **this** situation, Isaiah prophesied.

- Some of his prophesies were for them in their day.
- Some of the prophesies had hints of a later restoration, where God would bring his people back from captivity,,,

(and that did happen, in part)

And we see hints of this in Chapter 11,

But Chapter 11 is what's known as "a messianic prophesy", and that's why we're reading it in the leadup to Christmas. It's a prophesy looking forward, to the coming Messiah – A king who would be a **good** king. A king like David...

You see, under the rule of David (It took a while to get there, but eventually), under the rule of King David, the land became secure against their enemies, and the whole nation became prosperous.

King Solomon (the son of David (the next king)) was well known for the wealth; and the opulent buildings; and for building the temple of God,,,, but it was actually King David who **gathered** this wealth and materials for the building projects, And it was the reign of peace that David secured against his enemies (God secured it, but David was King at the time),,, And it was this peace that made the glory days of Solomon possible...

But although King Solomon was given wisdom to rule, the downfall of the House of David began with that very first generation. In his old age, King Solomon took for himself, many foreign wives, and with them, he took on their gods...

So, by the time of Isaiah, there had been a long history of kings **from** the line of David. Some of them were good(ish). Some of them were downright evil... Some would turn their hearts to God (but never completely). Others would turn to foreign gods and idols.

But one of the key problems for Israel, was that it had become a kingdom divided against itself. Only 2 generations after David, when King Solomon died, Rehoboam (son of Solomon) became the next one. And he was an idiot. He didn't listen to his wise elderly counsellors, and he began to treat the people like slaves.

And so 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel (all but Judah[King David] and Benjamin [King Saul]) left, to form their own kingdom.

Alright, so it used to be the nation of Israel, but from about 950BC, it became Judah (in the South) and Israel (in the North)... And they were at loggerheads with one another, and they even went to war against one another...

Jesus once said, "A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." And that was very true for Israel.

And so, in our Bible reading today, I don't know if you noticed, but a few times it talked about there being peace and togetherness between Judah and Ephram. Judah represents the tribes of Judah & Benjamin in the South (and Jesus was born into the tribe of Judah {they were the Jews}). And Ephram is referring to the Northern Kingdom (Israel)...

And so, Isaiah 11 is looking forward to the promise of the coming Messiah – the king who would once again, unite all twelve tribes of Israel. He would bring them together again, as the one people of God...

And we're still waiting. It hasn't happened yet.

Even when Jesus (the Messiah) came, they ultimately rejected Him, because He didn't do, what they expected Messiah to do. It seems to me, their expectations for the Messiah and their hopes and dreams, for what His coming would mean for them, was very much focused on the physical – was focused on this world and what they thought, is even **possible** to happen in this world...

But the thing is, when God sent His Son, Jesus, He wasn't going to do a few renovations on an old kingdom. He was beginning to build His new Kingdom – the Kingdom of God.... Jesus sometimes referred to it as the Kingdom of Heaven. Sometimes He called it the Kingdom of God... But it was a Kingdom that would be completely new...

You know how some trees, when you cut them down, from the stump, they start regrow. Well, that's the picture we're given here...

It talks about a shoot, coming up from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

King David was the son of Jesse. And from Jesse to David, to Solomon, to Rehoboam...., had come a long line of kings... But where had that led them? Nowhere good.

And so, God was going to cut the royal line, right back to the stump... And that's why Jesus is sometimes called "The Son of David". He's not the son of

Solomon/Rehoboam/Uzziah/Manasseh/Josiah (or of the multitude of decedents through to Jesus).

He's most commonly referred to as the Son of God, or the Son of David...

And Jesus is not like any other king. Isaiah prophesied: The Spirit of YHWH shall rest upon Him.

And because He is filled with the Spirit of God, He will be impossibly magnificent...

the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.
³ And his **delight** shall be in the fear of YHWH.

Ohhhhh... If only **we** could be ruled by Godly leaders – leaders who had a **genuine** fear of YHWH God...

And if only our courts and judges and juries would make just judgments...

Today, the wealthy pay their Kings Councils tens of thousands of dollars a day to represent them in court, to take down the little guy...

And sometimes it's reversed, where a jury will award an outlandish settlement to the little guy, because they hate the big guy and want to see him suffer...

If only judgments were not made on:

- appearances; or
- clever arguments; or
- the prejudices of those sitting in judgment.

If only they were made on truth...

Well, hold on, because Isaiah says, that's day's coming:

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

Fancy legal arguments aren't going to sway Jesus.

**⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;**

You see, when Jesus returns, that will be the Day of Judgment. And yes, the poor will be judged (along with the rich), but rich and poor alike, will be judged with righteousness. The wealthy aren't going to get any special treatment. And the poor don't get to use the excuse "Oh, I had a bad upbringing"..

When Jesus judges, He is absolutely true, and absolutely fair.

Won't that be so good...

But I want you to notice: Things doesn't go so good for those who are on the wrong side of the judgment.

**and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his
mouth,**

Do you understand this? To strike with a rod, is talking about punishment. Justice, demands retribution... And that's where our justice system has fallen down, because we don't have a "justice" system any more. What we have, is a "corrections" system. The philosophy behind it is, "humans are innately good", and therefore, if a person has done wrong, we can correct them and show them the right way, and they will be "rehabilitated" (as if they had a sickness they need to recover from)...

How is that working for our society??? Not very well...

You see, it's a philosophy that lives in la-la land... The truth of the matter, is that humans are not innately good, but evil. Why? Because of a 3-letter word called "sin"...

Sin, is the rejection of God, and the embracing of evil. It's the opposite of what we see in Jesus: Jesus knows YHWH; He fears YHWH; and His **delight**, is to fear YHWH...

Do you know YHWH God? Do you fear Him? Do you **delight** in the fear of YHWH God???
Jesus does...

It's only when we repent of sin and receive the Lord Jesus as **our** Lord and Master, that we too, can know God – that we can genuinely know God – like, really know Him... And in knowing Him, we can delight in the fear of God...

For some of us, it might be hard for us to reconcile those two terms: **fear** of God, and **delight** in the fear of God... I mean, like, how can you really, really like, the fear of God???

What it is, is a picture of grandeur/awe. It is a picture of the holiness of God, that can strike fear within us, but with it, comes a delightful embracing of the holiness and unapproachability of God, because in Christ Jesus, we become His beloved children.

I'm going to say that again:
It's a delightful embracing of the holiness and unapproachability of God, because in Christ Jesus, we become His beloved children (that He holds near and dear).

But of course, there's none of that delight for those who reject God. For them, the coming of Jesus will be a terrible, terrible day.

and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

There are a few crazies around who believe that they are on a holy mission to kill those who are evil... Some see it as their Godly and civic duty to take up arms against anyone they consider to be an oppressor or tyrant... What a load of nonsense.

Jesus is the One who dishes out the judgment. And He's not going to need your help or my help to do it.

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.

And when Jesus returns, His Kingdom will arrive in all of its fullness.

The laws of nature are going to be totally upended... When Jesus came the first time around, we saw little hints of the Kingdom of God (with the healings and the miracles of Jesus), but we haven't seen anything like this.

The wolf will live with the lamb...
What sort of crazy talk is that??? A wolf is even more vicious than a dingo... *Here in our own shire, millions of dollars have been spent on exclusion fencing, to try and keep wild dogs away from sheep...*

You know what: When Jesus returns, you're not going to need them exclusion fences. There will be no violence/death/apex predators tearing apart the weak and vulnerable...

the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf (that's the one ready to eat) 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.

Infants will play over the top of a snake hole;
And the toddler will shove his arm down it...

BTW kids, don't try that yet. Be afraid of snakes. Be very afraid of snakes. If you see one, keep right away from it, and go and get your mum & Dad.

And so, we have here, a picture of this complete change in the natural order. How can that even be possible?

I'll tell you how:

It's possible, because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of YHWH
as the waters cover the sea.

Think on that for a moment: "as the waters cover the sea" It is a complete infilling. The billions of Gegalitres of water, is what **makes** it "the sea". And **the earth shall be full of the knowledge of YHWH**. That's what will make it "the earth", because the whole earth will know YHWH. When Jesus returns, it's not just going to be a little bit of fixing up around the edges that happens.

In Revelation 21, which is the second-last chapter in the Bible, God says "**Behold, I am making all things new.**"

In fact, let me read the start of chapter 21:

Revelation 21:1–7 (ESV)

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

You see, Isaiah 11 and Rev 21 are speaking of the same event. All of the evil is going to be stripped away. And the goodness of God is going to flood in... As much as the sea is full of

water, the earth will be full of the goodness and the holiness of God.

And on that day, the Lord is going to gather all of His people together. Judah & Ephraim (the divided kingdom) will become one. And geography is going to be no barrier to their coming together. Mighty rivers will be crossable; Sea inlets that separate one coast from another, will cease to exist; Difficult passes will become highways. From every country in the North/South/East/West and from over the seas, God will gather together His people.

And there is a picture of the nations coming together: Jesus will stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire

I praise God that the Son of God came to reconcile **all** peoples – to reconcile **all** nations to Himself, because if He didn't, we'd be on the outer. In Him, there is:

- life; and
- peace; and
- justice...

And at His coming, the whole earth will be filled with His glory and holiness...

What a wonderful coming... And as Disciples of Jesus, we look forward to it... But with sadness, our hearts grieve for the wicked who will be judged...

Why are the wicked judged? Why does Jesus slay them with the breath of His mouth? Why in Revelation, are we told of the wonderful blessings for the children of God, but then it says:

Revelation 21:8 (ESV)

⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death."

Why? Because we get what we choose. Those who repent of sin and receive Jesus as Lord – those who delight in the fear of YHWH, well, we get to have the earth emptied of sin, and filled with the holiness and goodness of God...

But those who reject God – those who embrace sin, well, they've already decided: They want no portion of the holiness of God... The last thing they want for eternity, is to be in a place completely filled with the holiness of the God Whom they reject...

When Jesus the Messiah came to Israel, when He came as the Prince of Peace, He wasn't the Messiah they were hoping for. They were looking for King who would value-add to their current world and the kingdom in which they lived. They were hoping for a King who would make them the next regional superpower.

Whereas Jesus came, and pointed them to the Kingdom of God that is breaking into the world now, but when it comes in all of its fullness, it's going to be something completely new.

What kind of Messiah, are we looking for?

When you came to church today, what were you wanting to hear?

Did you hope to hear an inspiration pep-talk to add a bit of Jesus to your “this world now” experience???

Or did you come to be reminded:

- of a Saviour Who was nailed to a cross of wood, and died, so that we might live?
- that the Kingdom we seek, is not of this world?
In fact, we will suffer in this world, **because** of the Kingdom that is to come...

Did you come to worship the One Who is the **signal for the nations**?

Let's pray:
Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord, as we enter this Christmas period,
We remember that You came as
the light of the World.
– the signal for the nations,
to Come – to be gathered.

We thank You,
that You willingly bore our sins on the cross,
that we might have life,
in Your Kingdom that is to come.

Lord, we long for that day,
when just as the sea is filled with water,
the earth shall be
full of the knowledge of YHWH.

And until then,
we pray that we would live as Your faithful people:

Living not for today,
but for the Kingdom that is to come.
And that we wouldn't be silent,
but that we would share this good news
with a world who desperately need a Saviour.

And as Your people,
May Your Spirit fill us
with wisdom and understanding;
with knowledge and the fear of the Lord;
And that we would delight in
fearing and knowing You.

in Your Holy Name,

Amen.