

Sermon Outline

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

THE BRANCH OF JESSE

(ISAIAH 11:1-4)

Previous Lessons: (1) The Savior of the World (Jn 4:42); (2) Our Place in the Son (Col 1:15-17); (3) Those of the Divine Image (Gen 1:26-28); (4) Hope for the Nations (12:1-3); (5) Priestly Kingdom (Ex 19:1-6); (6) The Throne of Forever (2 Sam 7:12-16)

I. Good News for a Downed Kingdom

II. The Shoot of Jesse Comes Forth (Isaiah 11:1)

- A. The prophecy begins this way: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”
1. Isaiah uses horticultural language to speak about the coming King.
 2. The King is like “a shoot” rising from a stump, “a branch” arising from its roots.
 3. The stump and the roots refer to Jesse, the father of King David (Rut 4:22).
 4. The stump of Jesse is the family of King David.
- B. What is the significance of likening Jesse’s family to a stump?
1. A stump is the remains of a tree after it has been chopped down.
 2. The stump is a bad sign, as it implies that something bad is about to happen to the House of David.
 3. Yet, the presence of a stump suggests that the tree/family is not entirely destroyed.
—There is hope for the future.
- C. What form does this hope take?
1. It takes the form of...
 - a. “a shoot” emerging from the stump
 - b. “a branch” coming out from its roots.
 2. Compared to the other great trees of the forest—Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, etc.—a little twig coming from the stump of Jesse is not an impressive sight.
 3. But this little Branch is going to be the future of Israel and the world.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does Isaiah describe the King who is to come? (2) Who is Jesse? (3) What is the significance of likening the royal family to a tree stump? Is this a bad sign or a good sign?

III. The Spirit of the Lord Will Rest on the Branch (Isaiah 11:2a)

- A. What or who is this Branch and Shoot from the line of Jesse?
1. The Branch is a person (“him”).

2. The Branch will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of the Lord himself: “And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him...”
- B. Why is it so important that this person is indwelt by the Spirit of the Lord?
1. In earlier times in Israel’s history, the Spirit of the Lord descended on key people, enabling them to do great things for the Kingdom of God.
 2. Exodus 31: The Holy Spirit descends on two individuals, Oholiab and Bezalel, enabling them to build the tabernacle of God.
 3. Judges: The Holy Spirit descended on military leaders, enabling them to fight Israel’s enemies and save God’s people from oppression.
 4. When the monarchy was established, the Holy Spirit came upon the kings, Saul, David, and Solomon, enabling them to give wise leadership to God’s people.
 5. The Holy Spirit empowers...
 - a. God’s people to do great works for the glory of God.
 - b. Israel’s leaders to become instruments of God’s leadership.
- C. The fact that the Spirit will be given to the Branch from Jesse’s stump tells us that this new leader is going to be just what Israel needs. —The Branch is going to be the new prophet leader of Israel, supported by the Lord God himself.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are two things we learn about the Branch of Jesse from verse 2? (2) Why is it so important for Israel’s new king to be indwelt by the Spirit of the Lord? (3) Who were those in the past who were given the Lord’s Spirit to perform great deeds of beauty, leadership, strength?

IV. The Traits of the Spirit of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2b-d)

- A. How will the Lord show forth his presence through this new King?
1. This is where we come to the list of the Holy Spirit’s traits in the rest of verse 2.
 2. Isaiah identifies key traits that would show up in the heavenly leader on whom the Lord’s Spirit rests.
 3. The assumption here is that what the Spirit of the Lord is, the Branch will be as well.
- B. First: The Spirit of the Lord is “the Spirit of *wisdom* and *understanding*.”
1. Wisdom and understanding are the ability to absorb knowledge; and use it in ways that advance God’s rule in the lives of others.
 2. Wisdom and understanding the holy use of knowledge, not just knowledge by itself.
 3. The Spirit of God enables the Branch of Jesse to be a wise and just ruler—a ruler whose words and decisions accurately represent the very will of God himself.
- C. Second: The Spirit of the Lord is also “the Spirit of *counsel* and *might*” (or “counsel and heroism”).

1. “Counsel and might” denote the actual practice of wise leadership.
 - a. To counsel is to devise wise plans.
 - b. “Might” or “heroism” denotes the ability to execute those plans.
 2. The Spirit of God enables the Branch of Jesse to be a strong and heroic executive.
- D. Third: The Spirit of the Lord is “the Spirit of *knowledge* and *the fear of the LORD*.”
1. These last two traits tie the King’s ability back to the worship of God.
 2. The Spirit of God enables the Branch of Jesse to be fully submitted to God.
 - a. “Knowledge” refers to an intimate acquaintance with God and his will.
 - b. “Fear” is awe and reverence for God.
 3. The coming King will rule not merely from his own sense of confidence, but from a deep-seated relationship with God himself.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are the traits of the Spirit of the Lord listed here? (2) What are “wisdom and understanding?” (2) What are “counsel and might”? (3) What are “knowledge and the fear of the LORD”?

V. The Branch’s Delight Is in the Fear of YHWH (Isaiah 11:3)

- A. Verse 3 makes clear that “his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.”
1. Unlike the kings of the world, the Branch will not find his happiness in wealth, military power, or pleasure.
 2. The Branch will delight in reverence of the Lord.
—Nothing would please this new King more than obeying God.
- B. This shows us that we *ought* to find our delight in God.
1. Delighting in God is not a luxury for the contemplative person.
 2. Delighting in God is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of God’s people.
 3. Just as the Spirit of YHWH delights in YHWH, so too will those whom he indwells.
 4. Do you know what it means to delight in the Lord? Have you asked for God to give you this fruit of the Spirit? Why not make this a regular prayer petition?
- C. But like any of the Spirit’s fruit, the will is also engaged.
1. We come to delight in God by choosing to do so.
 2. Choosing to delight in God means choosing to find...
 - a. our happiness in doing God’s commandments.
 - b. our ultimate sense of fulfillment in what God has done.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does delight in the fear of the Lord set the Branch apart from the previous kings of Israel and the world? (2) What does it mean to delight in the fear of the Lord? (3) Do you know what it means to delight in the Lord? Have you asked for God to give you this fruit of the Spirit? Why not

make this a regular prayer petition? (4) Choosing to delight in God means choosing to find our happiness in God's Word and in God's glorification. Reflect on this and discuss.

VI. The Result of the Branch's Delight in YHWH (Isaiah 11:3-4)

- A. The remainder of verse 3 and the whole of verse 4 shows what would happen as a result of the Spirit of the Lord dwelling on the Branch.
- B. First: *The Spirit-empowered Branch would make just judgments.*
 1. What are such judgments like?
 - a. They are not judgments based on appearances, gossip, or hearsay: —“He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear [.]”
 - b. They are judgments based on God's standards of righteousness and equity. —“but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...” (v 4)
 2. Isaiah 11:3-4 is instructive for the practice of critical thinking.
 - a. For some people, critical thinking is about finding fault with anything around them, in a sophisticated, intelligent-looking way.
 - b. The Spirit-empowered King demonstrates critical thinking at its best.
 - i. It's thinking from God's standards of righteousness.
 - ii. Often, the kind of critical thinking that we see in people comes from a God-less stand point.
 - (A) These people—while claiming to be wise!—also reject God as their Lord.
 - (B) The philosophies they produce are godless, and lead to injustice and dehumanization.
 - (C) Many of the wicked philosophies in our day and age (e.g. Naturalism, Secular Humanism) and their implications for human life are results of godless critical thinking.
 - iii. We have here a vision of *God's* kind of critical thinking.
 - (A) It is thinking that is humble and accountable to God.
 - (B) It does not judge merely by what is immediately visible. —because our vision may be limited.
 - (C) It does not base its conclusions simply on what people say —even if these happen to be philosophers, scholars, journalists, or politicians.
 - (D) Instead, the Prophet King will judge by taking all the facts into account—and then submitting them to the wisdom of God's Word.
 3. Those who benefit from the King's critical thinking are the poor and the meek of the earth.
 - a. They are those who have been treated unjustly by the powerful.

- b. The King's Spirit-empowered critical thinking is dedicated to helping the oppressed.
 - c. When Isaiah was prophesying, social injustice was institutionalized in Israelite society.
—Isaiah 10:1-2: “Woe to those *who decree iniquitous decrees*, and the writers who keep *writing oppression*, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey.”
 - d. When the royal Branch ascends to his throne, he will restore justice to the oppressed.
- C. Second: *The Spirit-empowered Branch will execute God's judgment on the wicked.*
- 1. This is where the quality of heroism or might comes into the picture: “and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”
 - a. The phrases “rod of his mouth” and “breath of his lips” are metaphors for the royal decrees that proceed from God's King.
 - b. Through his just decrees, the King will destroy the wicked.
 - 2. Pay attention also to the scope of this judgment: The Branch of Jesse “shall strike *the earth...*”
 - a. The word “earth” here doesn't just refer to the wicked of Israel, but it refers to the wicked of the whole world.
 - b. We know that the King's judgment will be global in scope because his royal work will result in this: “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (v 9).
- D. In summary:
- 1. From out of the broken family of David, the Lord God will raise a new king.
 - 2. Unlike the previous kings of Israel and the wicked kings of the world, this king will be ruled by the Holy Spirit, the very Power of YHWH God himself.
 - 3. This is the same Holy Spirit who...
 - a. dwelled on the prophets and the kings of old
 - b. enabled God's ordinary people in ages past to do great things for God.
 - 4. This Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, and the knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
 - 5. Through him, God himself will act for the sake of the poor and the oppressed.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What would happen as a result of the Spirit's dwelling upon the king? (2) What kinds of judgments will the Branch make? (3) How is the Branch's righteous judgment a vision of Godly critical thinking? (4) To whom does the king devote his wise judgments? (5) According to Isaiah 10:1-2, what was the state of justice in Israel at the time? How were the poor oppressed? (6) What will the coming king do to the wicked?

VII. Jesus Christ, the Spirit-Empowered Branch of Jesse

- A. When the Lord Jesus was beginning his ministry, he goes into a synagogue one Sabbath day.
- B. During the service, the Lord reads from Isaiah 61:1-2, a passage about the coming King of Israel:

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn.*

- C. Jesus says, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21).
—By that, Jesus was claiming to be the royal, Spirit-empowered Savior of whom Isaiah wrote.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What text does Jesus read at the synagogue? (2) Of whom does the Scripture speak?

VIII. Evangelism Is Guiding People to the Branch of Jesse

Evangelism is directing people to the royal Branch of Jesse who has come. We guide people to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit-empowered King, because he is the Good News of God. Now that Christ has ascended to his throne, God's just and righteous Kingdom has begun. Thus, evangelism does not call attention to the Church, but to its Lord.

- A. Based on this definition of evangelism—that evangelism is pointing people to the King whom God has sent—we can see what evangelism is not.
 - 1. First: *Evangelism is not about the charisma of the evangelist.*
 - a. Sometimes, Christians have this impression that a good evangelist is always a gifted, charismatic public speaker.
 - b. The kernel of truth here is that many gifted evangelists do end up having public ministries.
 - c. But that doesn't mean all gifted evangelists will speak publicly, or that all evangelists must have charisma.
 - d. Our tendency is to focus on the messenger rather than the message; the evangelist rather than the evangel.
 - e. If the Branch of Jesse himself is the Good News, the focus of evangelism ought to be on the Branch himself.

- f. Since we are drawing people to Christ, not to ourselves, just about anyone can do evangelism, not just those who are particularly skilled at it.
- 2. Second: *Evangelism is not about us having answers to all the difficult questions of life.*
 - a. In a complex world, Christians may feel a need to be experts in all things in order to be good witnesses for Christ.
 - b. We may feel pressure from the very people we seek to reach. —They want to know *how* exactly the Lord Jesus will bring justice to the world and solve issues of social and economic injustice.
 - c. The kernel of truth is that Christians really should be more aware of what justice should look like in their various fields in society.
 - d. But the danger comes when we think we need to have all the answers.
 - i. That will never happen!
 - ii. Since we ourselves are still sinful, whatever solutions we devise can never claim God’s absolute endorsement.
 - e. Thus, we must recognize that evangelism is not about making much of Christians or the Church. —It’s about directing people to the Branch of Jesse who will bring justice and salvation to them.
 - f. In the area of personal counseling, which is where most of us will do our evangelism, we point people to Christ by...
 - i. directing them to Scripture
 - ii. by praying with and for them.
- B. It may seem simplistic to point people only to Christ.
 - 1. The temptation is to add more things to Christ to create a more impressive Gospel to fit the times.
 - a. To Christ we add the need for deeper piety from Christians.
 - b. To Christ we add more cultural engagement from Christians.
 - 2. But Christ alone is enough.
 - a. Isaiah does not present the Branch of Jesse as having any helpers, other than the Spirit of God.
 - b. By the Spirit, the Branch of Jesse—Jesus Christ—will achieve salvation for the world.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) If the Branch of Jesse is the coming King, what is evangelism about? (2) What is evangelism not about? (3) How are you tempted to point to yourself—to put yourself at the center and distract people from Christ—in your evangelistic work? (4) What are two ways we direct people to Christ in our interactions with them? (5) What are some other ways we add to the simplicity of the Gospel?