

Advent – The Shoot of Jesse

Take a look at the two vehicles pictured on the screen. Which one is more like Jesus? The ambulance or the Disney-resort shuttle bus?

On one hand since Jesus comes to rescue us from our sins and from eternal death, you could say that he's like the ambulance.

On the other hand, Jesus didn't just come to patch us up before dropping us back into our humdrum lives. He is coming again to take us to a wonderful place called heaven. So you could say that he's also like the shuttle bus from a Disney resort.

Today the prophet Isaiah wants to impress upon us this second truth, that the advent or coming of Jesus means the advent of Eden—that garden of Paradise where Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with all before the fall into sin. Today's sermon text should give you hope and encouragement as you slog through life on this sin-wrecked earth.

Isa 11:1-10

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. 9 They 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. 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.

1. The Judgment of Judah

Let's start with the stark reality of the world as it is.

The prophet Isaiah knew well that kind of world.

In his day, 700 years before the time of Christ, the rich took advantage of the poor, spouses cheated on each other, men boasted about how much they could drink, and many didn't even pretend to worship the true God. King Ahaz went as far as shutting and locking the doors of the temple!

God was not going to stand idly by, however, as his people mocked him.

He was going to use Assyria and Babylon as his chainsaws to mow down the proud and arrogant of Judah. The royal line of David itself would be reduced to nothing but a stump.

That happened when the Babylonians captured the last king of Judah, killed his sons before him, and then put his eyes out before dragging him to Babylon.

The way that God dealt with Judah is the way that he will also deal with us if we're not careful. Like the people of Judah, we know well God's laws.

We have the advantage of getting to hear and learn his Word often. But we are also tempted to go through the motions of worship. We're led to believe that as long as we show up on Sunday morning then it's OK to lie our way through the week when we give excuses for why we didn't follow His commands. Instead of repenting for our outbursts we excuse them by blaming the ineptness of others.

But God will not stand idly by as we dig ourselves deeper in sin. He will intervene and will cut us down to size because that's how much he loves us.

He would rather we suffer now for a little while, than suffer eternally in hell because we threw away his love like a shoe that doesn't fit anymore.

2. The Shoot of Jesse

Yes, God would cut down the family line of King David because they had forsaken him, but that wouldn't be the end of the matter. It couldn't be the end because God had promised that a savior would be born from that family line.

And so, God gave this glimmer of hope through the prophet Isaiah when he said: **"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1)**. Jesse is of course the father of King David.

So even though that family line seemed dead with the exile of King Zedekiah, in time, there would be new life. A new king would arise from humble beginnings. He would be nothing more than a shoot barely noticed by others.

But it's also clear that he would be no ordinary person, for Isaiah went on to prophesy about him: **"The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and 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 sash around his waist" (Isaiah 11:2-5)**.

When Jesus was baptized, he received a special measure of the Holy Spirit. Why would he need the Holy Spirit since he was God? Well because Jesus was also man. Unlike Oneness Pentecostals, we believe in the Trinity, that there are 3 distinct persons that makes up the Godhead. Otherwise, Jesus praying to the Father would be ludicrous because in essence He would be praying to Himself.

The Holy Spirit came to assist and empower the God-man Jesus in his work. He gave the God-man wisdom and power. He worked in Jesus the desire to obey his heavenly Father, even though it meant that he would eventually have to give up

his life on the cross. The Holy Spirit ensured that Jesus would follow through with our rescue, just as the gas in the ambulance ensures that the paramedics make it to where they are needed.

3. The Promise of a Second Eden

But as we said in the introduction, Jesus isn't just like an ambulance, he's also like a resort shuttle bus.

Yes, the advent of Jesus means the advent of Eden. Listen to how Isaiah put it. ***"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 cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with 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 resting place will be glorious"* (Isaiah 11:6-11).**

The scene that Isaiah describes is not a scene you'll see on the Animal Planet network. Wolves don't hang out with lambs; they devour them. Leopards don't play games with goats; they make them game. And any parent who lets his toddler play by a nest of poisonous snakes is going to be charged with child endangerment!

Sure, we Adams and Eves were created to rule over the animals, but the fall into sin turned animals into wild beasts so that when we head off into the backcountry here in Florida we do so with a certain amount of trepidation of the gators, panther and snakes that could be lurking around every corner.

We fear them because they live by instinct, not conscience. Their motto is not "live and let live," but "kill to live."

The fall into sin has made the animals the way they are, but it's also made us the way we are. And the truth is we are worse than the animals! At least most of them attack and kill for their own survival. We rip into each other for laughs. We tear reputations to shreds because we think we have the right to judge. We purr outward piety on Sunday morning, but inside lurks a lion that is eager to devour. That old animal within cannot be domesticated; it can only be killed. (Chad Bird) We use the excuse of, "well, that's just the way I am; I am pointing out truth the way I see it." Never once taking into account the way God sees things or bringing love into the equation.

That's what Jesus came to do and did so through baptism when he transformed us into lambs of his heavenly Father. Yes, there is a change that has taken place inside of each believer. Prompted by the Holy Spirit we do want to obey God's will. Think of how that dramatic change took place in the life of the Apostle Paul. He who was once like a wolf on the hunt for Christians, was so changed that he didn't just learn to tolerate Christians, he became one of them hanging out with the lambs of Jesus.

Isaiah described this change that Jesus would bring about in another way. He said that the shoot coming up from the stump of Jesse would bear fruit.

Some of that fruit is in evidence this morning. A group of God's sons and daughters took time out of their busy schedules to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his Word, and to confess their faith in the miraculous shoot from the stump of Jesse. As a result of the Savior's work, there are fathers here who have not forgotten that their role as heads of the family is to take the lead in loving, self-giving service to the other members of the family.

There are mothers who show the fruit of the Savior's work by thinking of their homes not as combination restaurant-motels, but places where the love of Jesus Christ is apparent.

The fruit of the Savior's work is apparent your lives when you realize that life is not for kicks, but for the glory of God. (John Jeske)

Living Out the Promise

But it's not easy displaying this Christian fruit in an unchristian world, is it?

That's why our text this morning is so good for us to hear.

The world as we know it won't last forever.

Isa 11:1-10

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Jesus' advent means the advent of Eden. Jesus will return and he will reverse the effects of sin.

Things will go back to the way they were meant to be. In Eden where Adam and Eve first lived, the lion did hang out with the lamb, and bears and cows did play together.

Although that kind of perfect harmony isn't here yet, God does invite us to practice that kind of harmony with one another as we live in the here and not yet of the Kingdom.

You may feel more like a wolf than a lamb some days, but with Jesus' forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit, you can be gentle with others.

You may be more of a jack rabbit than a tortoise, but with God-given patience you can move at the pace others need you to move.

This is all possible because a shoot has grown up out of the stump of Jesse just as God said it would. And in time this Jesus will return and with him will be an eternal life of perfect peace and harmony.

Make sure you will be among those enjoying that life by standing firm in Jesus and his forgiveness. Amen.