

**Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 349, 12-08-2019 † Advent 2**

“Lord God, you have appointed me as pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

**ISAIAH 11**

A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. <sup>2</sup>The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. <sup>3</sup>He will be delighted with the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, nor will he render decisions based on what he hears with his ears, <sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he will judge the poor, and he will render fair decisions in favor of the oppressed on the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath from his lips he will put the wicked to death. <sup>5</sup>Righteousness will be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his hips. <sup>6</sup>The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together, and a little child will lead them. <sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear will graze together, and their young ones will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the cattle. <sup>8</sup>The nursing child will play near a cobra’s hole, and the weaned child will put his hand into a viper’s den. <sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. <sup>10</sup>This is what will take place on that day. The peoples will seek the Root of Jesse, who will be standing like a banner for the peoples, and his resting place will be glorious.

~ Stump Branch Fruit Justice Mouth Zoo Root Banner ~



How difficult has it been to wait for your Christmas tree? I put ours up Friday night. Still haven’t had the chance to put up ornaments. Trees were a Renaissance addition, maybe an invention of Martin Luther, who wanted to replicate his walk in the snowy woods and brought a tree into his home. Christmas trees were inevitable ... and still are. There was no doubt about it; the

Lord Jesus shall return, and He is worth the wait. Let us see how the prophet had to wait for ...

## Isaiah's Christmas Tree

The Lord in Isaiah 10 was a precision tree care specialist, a serious arborist. He brought the ax down on any who tried to wield power that belongs to God alone. Unfortunately, this would include the royal line of David.

Instead of "Davidic," you might as well call the line of kings in Judah, "stumpy." The name of the ax was "Assyria," the name of the saw was "Babylon." They came to lop off the boughs of the wicked kings to follow David. They came to reduce David's line to humility, chopping it at its base. Isaiah's Christmas tree was nothing to take home and brag about. It would have no future. It was a Christmas stump.

Isaiah was just "calling it like it is." The kings of David's line had wandered from the path and erred. They had denigrated the priesthood and ignored God's Law. They embraced the false gods and fertility goddesses from the peoples around them. They committed murder and extortion and attacked the faithful in a jealous rage. So it would be a just God who was behind all the punishment they endured. This is what happens ...

- to sinful rulers who ignore justice;
- to evil lords who subtract from God's commandments;
- to wicked kings who forsake the true God.
- when sinners refuse to repent of their sin.
- when worshipers of false gods don't turn from their ways.

They become a stump. They had waited long and hard, imagining that God would raise their tree of majesty and earthly splendor, but they had denied Him. They had abandoned their own God, only turning back to Him when they needed something.

But the Davidic line would not remain a stump forever. Yes, the house of David would be reduced to its humble beginnings in Bethlehem. You had to go back to David's father, Jesse, a private citizen, to discover that. From that stump, if you can imagine it, a slender Shoot would branch out of the family tree.

All the other stumps would remain dead and lifeless. Assyria and Babylon too would become stumps, forever after. Help and hope would come from an unexpected source. From Bethlehem, like a slender Shoot out of a stump, the miracle of miracles. From the royal line would come a virgin birth, a little Twig, a King of apparent insignificance, with a humble and despised beginning.

This Twig would thicken and stretch and grow and bear fruit. We are expected to bear fruits of repentance, but this Branch never failed to show forth fruit.

Did you hear the call of John in the gospel? Did you learn that God expects fruits in keeping with repentance? Do you hear the example of the wicked kings? Have you looked at the times when you ought to have changed your ways, and have you seen that you failed? Have you been visibly fruitless? Have you missed chances to be helpful, to break bad habits of sin, and produce good deeds?

I know I have. I haven't always known where to look. I make excuses. I try to forget. But I bring some of the same sins to the altar for forgiveness from week to week. I have hurt my neighbor and put up a battle with God. The most frustrating part is that I worry \*if I mean it\* when I confess my sins.

Isaiah 11:2, this second verse, is where we can look. The Twig, the slender Shoot, was, of course, Jesus Christ. We are told that He had the Spirit without measure. As a man, Jesus was limitless in the fruits of His labor. "*2The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*" What wonderful comfort to know that Jesus has the Spirit in full measure, without limit. *In Him dwells all the fullness of the Divinity bodily* (Col. 2:9). From Jesus' baptism as the Christ, the Holy Spirit was poured out on Him and remained on Him.

As such, He is the source of all good fruit. The same Son of God who forgives our sins sends His Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, into our hearts. From there the Holy Spirit puts our hands and feet to work, helping and assisting and generating good deeds for our neighbors. We need only to look to Him in His means of grace. We can seek His help, that He would cause us to want to change our hearts. We can ask Him to grow His fruit within us, fruits in keeping with repentance.

When you are in need of good works this week, and in need of fruits of the Spirit, then ... Look to the Son who has the Spirit without measure.

And so this Twig, this slender Shoot on Isaiah's Christmas tree, would thicken into a Branch and would stretch farther. This Branch in the line of David would rule rightly, unlike those past kings. He would put forth a weight of fruit for all who might find shade underneath Him, as His subjects under His majestic rule.

What are these fruits? What would mark His majestic rule? That is answered in the sevenfold Spirit. We have already learned how the Holy Spirit was with Him and remained on Him.

- Wisdom, the ability to see through everyone and to the heart.
- Understanding, the ability to perceive differences.
- Counsel, to know what His people need and give them His sure Word.
- Power, to defend his people and to carry out the plan he devised.
- Knowledge, intimately acquainted with the Lord.
- Fear of the Lord, concerned about what the Lord desires, even respectfully and reverently submitting to his will.

This Messiah also has a Christmas wardrobe: two belts, righteousness and faithfulness. We often change our minds about what to wear to the Christmas party, or how to deck the halls; but the Messiah's wardrobe is marked by steadiness and reliability. This is spiritual equipment. The Messiah does not change His mind or course of action. He carries out His every policy. What He reveals and promises will be done.

How great will this Branch become? We are told, *"<sup>10</sup>This is what will take place on that day. The peoples will seek the Root of Jesse, who will be standing like a banner for the peoples, and his resting place will be glorious."* The people would look for the Root of new life, seeking the greatest rule. They would learn the slender Shoot, which thickened and would become a Branch, would finally extend deep as a Root and rise above as a Banner.

To understand the picture, we can think of a flag raised overhead. Jesus in John 8:32-33, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. He said this to signify what death he should die."* His cross has been the banner that draws the nations to Him. *"... and his resting place will be glorious"* (10b). Why? It would be empty. He would return. It would be worth the three-day wait. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.