

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

December 8, 2024

Unimaginable Peace

Advent 2024

Isaiah 11:1-10

KEY VERSES

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.*

²*The spirit of the LORD shall 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.*

³*His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.*

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

⁴*but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor
and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth;
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 around his waist
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.*

⁶*The wolf shall live with the lamb;
the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
the calf and the lion will feed 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 asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.*

⁹*They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.*

¹⁰*On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him,
and his dwelling shall be glorious.*

This passage from Isaiah is typical of the prophecies he would deliver for the people of God, to open their eyes to what God was doing in their midst. In the midst of this dark time, Isaiah speaks a message of hope and peace. Hope will be found through "the stump of Jesse" - Jesus the Messiah - product of this messy family who cut themselves off over and over from the love of God. **Where have you seen restoration occur in your own circumstances, against all odds and with all forces working against it?**

The peace of Isaiah's vision is unimaginable, and a peace that only God can create. True peace is beyond merely the absence of conflict - it is God's "shalom" of wholeness and completion. As Paul writes in Philippians 4:7, "and the peace of Christ which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." No matter our circumstances, God's peace is always accessible to us because of Christ Jesus. When we seek His peace, it gives us the capacity to have peace within ourselves, and then consequently others. **When have you been able to find peace in the midst of stressful circumstances? How did that peace then translate to others?**

This Messiah who will be born from the stump of Jesse will usher in this peaceful kingdom. This seems so hard to fathom here in our lived experience, in which the world does not look anything like this. The chasm between where we are and where we will be often seems too huge. However, there are divisions in each of our lives we long to reconcile. **How do we reconcile the promise of this idyllic peaceful rest with the reality of our world? How is the answer found in the tension between the "now" and "not yet"?**

Thanks be to God that His kingdom is at hand, and His promise that the end will be good. His promise of a peaceful kingdom is not only a future one, but one that is happening right now amidst opportunities of hope and new life. Hope gets its start by emerging in unexpected places. We're called to be bearers of peace, participating in the great things God is doing in the world. **How might you open your heart to the miracle of this grace? What is robbing you of peace, and where do you need to lay down your weapons and invite God into your conflicts so He can remake situations?**