



Part 2: Isaiah 11.1-10 | Christmas Past, Present, & Future
12.10.2017

Introduction

IT'S CHRISTMAS! It's here & going fast! Christmas parties, Christmas shopping. Christmas Music. I love it all. Man Christmas EVE is 2 weeks away from today!! Which is why we put those inviter cards on your seat. I can't stress this enough. Especially with our services being in the morning, this Christmas is AN INCREDIBLE time to invite people to join you for church. My commitment to you is the same as it is every week: That mercy will be a welcoming church where they can consider the message of hope found in Jesus.

We've given you ONE inviter card on your seat. Now we have plenty more and you can pick them up as you leave today. This is more symbolic. Who is the one person that comes to mind this Christmas who is far from God, but close to you? Invite them!

If you have your bible go ahead and open up to Isaiah 11. OT book. 3rd longest book of the bible. If you find the psalms go to the right if you find Jeremiah go to the left. If you are scrolling on your screen I believe its one soft thumb scroll. We are in this book of Isaiah this month talking about Christmas. The theme of the series is BEHOLD. And that's the theme because its really the action step from all of Christmas. It's an old word that just means to be overwhelmed with AWE...That something so captures your attention you can't look away from it because it is so SIGNIFICANT, beautiful, so majestic, so LIFE ALTERING that everything in you is fixed on it. That's our hope man that Christmas ROUTINE would be replaced with Christmas WONDER. That as you look into the Christmas of scripture you are awe-struck. I think that's going to happen for some of you today.

If you were here last week we said the bible calls Isaiah a prophet. Which means God is telling him what to say and he's saying it to Israel. And we said God shows Isaiah what is going to happen at a few points in history down the road and Isaiah warns them now in this writing. And I actually think a really helpful analogy for reading Isaiah that you are familiar with is Charles Dicken's story A Christmas Carol. Where

Ebenezer Scrooge is all ba-humbugging Christmas. But on Christmas eve he gets visited by 3 ghosts: Christmas Past, Christmas Present, & Christmas Future. Christmas Past reminds him what happened that made him the ba-humbugger he is. Everybody has a past. Present shows him tiny tim all sick & hurting and how he could be a blessing to this boy & his family. Future shows his sad hopeless death and the death of others. He wakes up Christmas morning completely changed. And now he's generous & kind to all. And the message is that if you could see where this road you are traveling down leads, maybe you too would change.

The prophet Isaiah is kind of like all 3 ghosts for us. He's going to show us the meaning of our Christmas past, the great hope of the future, and what it means for us here in Christmas Present. Verses 1 - 5 are, for us, Christmas Past. Isaiah is writing 700 years PRE-CHRISTMAS and we are reading it 2000 years POST CHRISTMAS. So for us, its Christmas past. And I want to show you WHY that first Christmas was such a big deal. Why you should BEHOLD Jesus. Then verses 6 - 10 will show us the promises of the future reign this king will have over the world. Why him on the throne as king is so good for us. And I'll show you how both CHRISTMAS PAST & ETERNITY FUTURE give us real, tangible hope for Christmas 2017.

_____ Promises of how Jesus Changes Everything.

Ok lets jump into Isaiah 11. I'm going to go slow through this and explain what is going on and show you the rich promises of hope available for you this Christmas.

[1] There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

See Isaiah is writing to God's people, Israel, who have a real problem. The evil and more powerful kingdom of Assyria has, as Isaiah said would happen...come in and brought a furious attack against Israel. Remember from last week this is a nation God promised he would raise up to bring the wrath of his judgment for their sin. But, he didn't let Assyria wipe them out. When it was time, God stopped the assyrians cold. Sent one of his angels and the angel killed 185k assyrians in one night. After that the assyrians tucked tail and ran. You can read about that in Isaiah 37. Now here's the thing. In Chapters 9-10 Isaiah said all this would happen. In fact, God called Assyria HIS axe that was used to chop down Israel. BUT, God had made a promise to Israel... that someone would sit on the throne of david forever. So even though the tree is chopped down and burned...Isaiah 11 opens carrying the metaphor saying that even though all that is left of Israel is a burned stump...one day a shoot will emerge from the stump of Jesse...Jesse was king David's dad. Why does that matter? Because God

promised that one of David's descendants would save mankind & rule the world forever. Isaiah is saying even though God allowed Israel to suffer for their sin, he will never leave them. He will never break his promises to them. And he WILL provide a savior king. And this shoot, this branch...will bear fruit. It...or as we see in verse 2... HE... will bring life. And who is this shoot from the stump of Jesse?
Sunday School Shocker Answer: It's Jesus! Grew up going to church and it got to the point where every answer was Jesus right?

The main character in Isaiah is a mystery "suffering servant king" who will one day rescue Israel and establish a kingdom of peace that will have no end. The gospel of matthew opens saying

[1] The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David..... Matthew 1:1

Now this Jesus...the shoot from Jesse...Isaiah describes who he will be. Remember Isaiah is Pre-Christmas. So he's saying when this king comes. Now we are looking after he came and we are looking back to what happened.

[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.

The Spirit of the LORD resting on him - This was actually a familiar expression because throughout Israel's history God would place his Spirit onto some of its Kings. It was God empowering them for their task of leading Israel. BUT, each time the leader would fall into sin and the Spirit of the Lord would leave. The Spirit of the Lord came on Saul but then was taken away, came onto David, then was taken away even though David pleaded for it not to be. Isaiah 61 says the coming mystery king will say "the spirit of the lord rests on me." And the gospel of Matthew says at Jesus' baptism the spirit descended like a dove.

[16] And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16-17

And the rest of verse 2 tells you how that Spirit will empower him:

- He will have the wisdom of God. True wisdom which is greater than the world's wisdom. Pay attention here. You know the Christmas nativity scene where three wise men, many even say those guys were kings...they come to meet baby

Jesus? The scene is important because these 3 wise men bow down to this baby. And the message is that the wisdom of the world is far inferior to the wisdom of God. Think about it. Even the way Jesus came into the world confronts the wisdom of the world. The KING OF THE WORLD? Where should he be born and what kind of party should he have? We'd expect a Bruno Mars Super Bowl Halftime Show level celebration for such a king. Think I'm off here? Ya'll remember when Prince William & Kate were having their first baby? People went BANANAS. Because the future king George was born. But Jesus? Born into poverty in a dirty stable.

- His ministry strategy was the same way: How do you ensure 1/4 of the world's population worships you as God? Would your strategy be to stay in a remote corner of the world out of the center of any real areas of influence and just as your career is taking off you get executed in disgrace.
- Jesus flips the world's wisdom on its head. That's why he says

[25] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 16:25

Jesus confounds the wisdom of his day and in doing so he reveals to us what true wisdom is. He did it in how he was born, in how he lived, in how he died, and in how he rose again. YOU CANNOT FIND TRUE LIFE living according to the normal wisdom of our day and age.

Christmas Past reveals the foolishness of the world's wisdom.

So here's the very real question: **What wisdom are you banking your happiness and security on?** Is it the American dream? that if you get a good job you will earn enough money to have security in your life? Is it the dream of one day getting married? And if you just get married you will finally be complete? Is it having kids? High School Student is it just getting into the right college or making that team or finally being accepted by that group of friends? What wisdom has crept into your heart and said "if you just get HERE you'll be ok?"

JOB, FRIENDS, SPOUSES, KIDS...They will ALL LET YOU DOWN. The American Dream should be called the American disappointment. Friends will disappoint you. Kids are huge exhausting sinners. Spouses will let you down. Jobs are filled with disappointment. There is only one source of true wisdom and its nothing like you expected. JESUS was unemployed, homeless, single, his friends betrayed him and he was executed in his early 30s. AND NONE OF THAT WAS A DISSAPOINTMENT. In fact it was the powerful, wise, successful act of love in history. But it makes no sense to the world. And he says if you follow him...there you will have true life. Will you follow him?

The Promise of Christmas Past: The gospel is the wisdom of God that gives you true, sustaining joy.

Lose your life and that's where you will find true life. Your job can't give you meaning. Your friends can't give you security. Here's a big one: YOU can't give you purpose. A lot of times we'll get into high school and college age and we'll say "I'm just trying to find myself." GOD SAYS THAT'S CRAZY! YOU HAVE FOUND YOURSELF. YOUR TRUE SELF IS AN INCOMPLETE SOUL ON A SEARCH FOR MEANING. THAT'S YOU. STOP TRYING TO FIND YOURSELF AND LOSE YOURSELF IN CHRIST. AND WHEN YOU LOSE YOURSELF IN HIM...THE SEARCH WILL BE OVER AND YOU'LL FIND THE MEANING YOU'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR!

Verse 3:

[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,

I'm going to add in verses 4 - 5 in just a moment but verse 3 is big. The true king...he's not going to look at outward appearances. It's building off verse 2. True wisdom, the real king...doesn't look at the outward appearance. Instead he looks inside. He judges the heart.

That's 2 Samuel 16.7. When Samuel was trying to figure out which one of Jesse's sons would be the future king of Israel God said to him

[7] But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature.... For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

CHURCH this is massive and it will set some of you FREE! God does not judge you by the quality of your actions but by the motivations of your heart.

Is that good news or bad news? It's both. The reason this is tied so closely to verse 2 is that there is a spiritual wisdom in our age that suggests I can do enough good things in my life to justify myself as a good person. And that same wisdom of our age says that if you've made a mess of your life you need to clean yourself up before you come to God. So people stay away from church because they think it's a place where God judges messy people.

So to the self-righteous person God says your actions don't matter only your heart does. And that's bad news. And to the person who has wrecked their life this is good news that God doesn't judge you by your past...but also bad news in that your past actions came from a heart that was motivated by selfishness and pride.

So the news is that we all, both the self-righteous sinner and the broken sinner, fall short of God's standards. That's why we need Christmas Past. Because Christmas Past says God sent someone who would not be a sinner. His actions were perfect and his motives were pure. And so he was judged perfect and God says this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. And that gift is that this perfect one exchanged places with you and I.

The Promise of Christmas Past: God's judgment was taken by Christ and Christ's acceptance was given to us.

That's the gospel. You don't have to earn your acceptance by God. You can't. But you can receive the gift of acceptance by God offered to you through Jesus' payment for your sin. Do you see the gift here?

For the wages of sin is death but the GIFT of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6.23

Maybe today is the day you receive that gift! Christian....Behold that gift this Christmas. Stare into it with AWE and WONDER. Isaiah keeps going

Watch what Isaiah says about Jesus in verses 4 & 5

[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.

Verse 4 is better translated "he shall bring about justice for the poor." In other words, Jesus is the king who gives voice to the voiceless and hope to the hopeless. He welcomes the poor and the needy. When the disciples try to keep the little children from coming to him Jesus says no no, let them come because this is people like this that the kingdom of heaven belongs to. Are you catching this? God isn't looking for you to IMPRESS HIM! God's kingdom is a kingdom of grace! He says "I have not come to save the righteous but the sinner." It is those who are aware of how messed up they are...of how inferior they are to God the father. Of how little they have to offer...those are the people who God's grace is for.

The Promise of Christmas Past: Your helplessness is preparation for God's redeeming power.

Martin Luther said "God's Grace is like water - it runs to the lowest places." When you finally realize you can't save yourself. That's when you are ready for God to help you and when you are there...oh God can unleash his power through you and he can break

the chains sin has on you. I've told you guys this before. Growing as a Christian...some people think that its learning more bible verses or giving more money or behaving better. No...real growth is becoming at the same time more aware of how Holy God is and how sinful you are. And how helpless you are to bridge the gap. How unworthy you are of God's love. And then in that helplessness...you become more RELIANT upon the power of the cross of Christ.

Now in verse 6 Isaiah shifts his focus a little. He moves from talking about the coming king to talking about the coming kingdom. And look what he says about the world when the king arrives. I'm going to read you 6 - 10.

[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.

Now what do you do with this? We can see that the first verses were clearly talking about Jesus. Everything Isaiah says in verses 1 - 5 the new testament picks up on and says look this is about Jesus. But, clearly that is not the case with 6 - 9 at least.

This sounds like some bizzare narnian version of Animal Planet. "Watch the wolf...with his long claws and sharp teeth... as he snuggles with a nearby herd of sheep." Isaiah can't be talking about now because That's not the way our world looks today. When you put a lion and a fattened calf together...you have to keep replacing the fattened calf. So what is happening here?

This is the deal with Advent Prophecies. They move in and out of talking about the first coming and second coming of Jesus. I heard John Piper explain Isaiah's perspective here like this: Imagine Isaiah is looking at a mountain range from really far away. If you look at the Blue Ridge Mountains from far away down I-40, the mountains appear to be one beside the other. But the closer you get, the more you

realize some are up close and others are still way far away. That's kind of like Isaiah's prophecy. Isaiah is looking at the two from way far away...but one is actually before the other. And we, in our time in history, stand in the valley between the two comings. Which means we have the great hope of salvation from Jesus' first coming... but still waiting on the complete effects of his kingdom to come. And verse 9 says one day the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord and there will be no more pain or hurt.

And this is massive for the Christian life. Because when you become a Christian it doesn't mean you won't suffer. In fact one of the clearest promises of scripture is that you WILL suffer. Sickness and natural disaster and evil are still present in our world. The promise here is that what God started in Jesus' resurrection...where he reversed death...one day he will do with all of creation. And there will be no more pain, anger, sadness, hurt, or death. That hope is the hope of that second mountain...the second coming of the king. And when he comes, all people will bow down and worship him.

[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.

That hope is what Christians behold not just at Christmas but all year long. Notice verse 10 it says in that day the “root” of Jesse? Verse 1 said the shoot of Jesse. How can one person be both a root and a shoot? Be both an ancestor and a descendant? Only God can do that. The one who created Jesse will become the one born into Jesse's line. Only if God was born into Jesse's line could this promise be fulfilled. And that's exactly who we behold at Christmas. God is born as a baby. Jesus - God with us.

The Promise of Christmas Future - When Jesus returns his kingdom will be one of peace and joy for all who follow him. Instead of 6yr old TJ Anderson fighting Cancer he'll be playing with cobras because sickness will be gone and fear & pain will be gone. It sounds like the ending of one of those cheesy hallmark movies I know. In fact it sounds too good to be true. This is the hard thing for skeptics to believe. But the hope of heaven gives such peace and perseverance to Christians now. And you are resting in something. Some future hope. I heard one theologian say the most remarkable thing about this story, the greatest story of love and hope ever told...is that its true. And when you finally realize its true, you will behold Christmas. Your heart and mind will race with wonder and awe, just as the 3 wise men did, as you stare into the glory of the nativity.

Charles Dickens believed the guilt of Christmas past & the fear of Christmas future would change Ebenezer's heart. The gospel says the love of Christmas past and the beauty and hope of Eternity with Christ will do that.

Let me close with what this means for Christmas Present. For us in 2017.

For some of you it means you can have hope this Christmas that you've never had before. Instead of Christmas being a few weeks where you try to grasp at some feel good moments and make a few memories you can have real hope. The gospel message is that Christ came...because he loves you. Maybe you don't hear the words I LOVE YOU all that much. That's God's message to you. He loves you. He says come just as you are. He promises he won't keep you in the mess you are in. But your helplessness is your preparation for him to work. Let him in.

Christian, we must tell others about this. If this is true! How could we keep it a secret? Joy to the world the Lord has come. We gotta tell the whole world! So start praying for those people you know who need to meet this savior.

To all of us - Behold. Behold the savior in the manger, Behold him healing sickness and reversing death. Behold him on the cross. GOD himself on the cross. Behold the empty tomb. Behold him ascending to the right hand of the father and behold him coming back bringing peace on ALL OF EARTH.

That's the message of Gospel Change. Change Not by religion, but by revelation. Not by doing things but by BEHOLDING him. The more you stare into the wonder of Jesus the more his love for you will overwhelm you and the more you will follow him and obey him as a response of worship to the God who saved you.