

Advent:

One of the messages of the Advent season is that God has remembered His promise to restore the world so that it will once again be what He intended it to be. In Genesis 12 He announces that He has a plan to bless the people of the world. In spite of our rebellion He has not turned away. He has not thrown up His hands and given up. In the Advent season we hear Him say that He will reconcile the human race to Himself and to each other.

The Advent Wreath

The Advent Wreath captures the themes of this season - Preparation and Joy. As we light the candles of the Advent wreath our anticipation builds and grows until we arrive at our remembrance of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. The 4 Candles traditionally represent 4 themes of the Advent Season – Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Reading: Luke 1:8 – 25 (NIV)

Today on this second Sunday in Advent, we light the candle of Peace. Are you experiencing Peace in this season? What steps can you take to experience Peace in your heart? What are you hoping will happen in your life?

Prayer –

Father, in this season of the year we pray for peace. Conflict eats at our soul. We cannot rest when there is conflict in our lives. We are aware that we are often not at peace with You. We are troubled by our sinfulness. We experience feelings of guilt. One of the reasons that Jesus came into the world was to make it possible for us to be a Peace with you. Because of what Jesus did on the cross You will forgive us, remove our guilt and shame and take us to yourself as your children. What a wonderful gift. Because we have found peace with you, we pray that that peace will spill over into our relationship with others. Amen.

Scripture Isaiah 11:1-10 (NIV)

Message: Christmas Hope from Isaiah, Part 2.

Many people enjoy the Christmas season. They look forward to time with friends, family dinners, the music of the season, and Hallmark movies (of which there are plenty!). But for many people that is all that Christmas is about. As Christians the birth of Jesus is what makes Christmas a big deal. **He is no ordinary baby.** And his birth is **not a moment in time event.** We celebrate his birth **because of who He is.** We celebrate His birth because of the significance of His arrival in the world. During these Sunday's in Advent this year, as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus, we are looking at some of the prophetic words of Isaiah as he anticipates the birth of Messiah. Why are we looking at these prophecies? It is important for us to understand who Jesus is and why He came. It is important for us to learn how the coming of the Messiah impacts this world and our lives. These prophecies are "Christmas Messages from Isaiah".

The Nature of the Messiah. Today we are looking at this passage in chapter 11. The passage tells us about the Nature of the Messiah, and the Nature of Messiah's Kingdom. Isaiah begins by telling us that this promised Savior will come from the stump of Jesse. Now we need to dig in a little here to understand who Jesse is and why Isaiah includes him in the prophecy. Jesse was from the tribe of Judah. Many years earlier a man by the name of Saul was the leader of God's people – the King. Saul started out well, but over time his heart turned cold toward God and God rejected him and his family as the ruling dynasty for His people. God instructed the prophet Samuel – the spiritual leader of Israel – to anoint a new king to serve as the leader of God's people. God directed Samuel to the family of Jesse. One of Jesse's sons would be anointed as the new king to replace Saul after he died. Jesse had 8 sons. Samuel went down the line, trying to discern which one would be King. He finally came to the youngest one, perhaps the one most unlikely to be a king. God said, "This is the one". His name was David. David was named King after Saul was killed in battle. And he

was a good king – not perfect, but a king after God’s own heart. The family of Jesse was not particularly noteworthy. There was no royal blood line. As a matter of fact, one of the female ancestors of Jesse was a woman named Rahab. She was a former prostitute. Jesse’s grandmother was a foreigner from the land of Moab. **But God choose an unlikely candidate to carry out His plan.** As Isaiah looks over the landscape of God’s people, and looks to the future, he recognizes that God’s people will need a new king. The family of David had drifted away from the Lord. The nation had broken covenant with God. As Isaiah considers the current situation, and the need for a new leader who would “Fear the Lord”, that is love the Lord, once again he is directed to the family of Jesse. As Isaiah looks, he realizes that the family tree of Jesse is now, no more than a stump. But God reveals to Isaiah that from this dead and lifeless stump a new branch will arise to lead God’s people.

As Isaiah tells us about this future leader or Messiah, he further tells us about His nature. **Verse 2.** The Spirit of the Lord would be upon Him. One of the theological doctrines that we are reminded of in the Christmas story is the doctrine of the **Incarnation**. Incarnation means to become flesh. As Isaiah writes of the coming Messiah, he sees evidence that the Messiah will be characterized by the presence of the Spirit in His life. He is aware that this Savior will be **God in the flesh**. A name that is given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means God with us. **That is the significance of Christmas** – God becoming flesh. The Messiah will be empowered by the Spirit of God. In the Messiah, God Himself has come to earth to establish His Kingdom.

What is the Nature of Messiah’s Kingdom? As the passage continues, Isaiah tells us what life will be like in this new Kingdom.

- It will be a Kingdom **characterized by integrity and fairness**. Justice will not go to the highest bidder. The oppressed and poor will no longer be the victims of a corrupt legal system.
- It will be a Kingdom **characterized by Righteousness** – conduct and behavior that conforms to the character of God’s holiness.
- As I studied the passage this week, one of the interesting aspects of this new world to me is **that the chaos in creation that is the result of sin will be brought to an end. (Vs. 6 – 9)** We do not fully grasp the effects of sin on all of God’s creation. Sin impacts our relationship with God and others. But because of sin creation is broken. Following the fall into sin, God announces: **“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it al the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.” (Genesis 3)** Paul writes about the chaos in creation as a result of sin in Romans 8: **For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it IN HOPE that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Rom 8:20-21)**

As Isaiah writes of this coming age of Messiah, he foresees a great reversal of the chaos of sin in nature.

- Finally Isaiah tells us that in the age of Messiah, the nations will rally to Him.

So the age of Messiah will be **a wonderful age when the Branch bursts forth from the stump of Jesse**. Jesus is an earthly descendent of Jesse. He is the Branch that will be **fruitful for the Lord**. That is why we celebrate His birth.

The final question that we always consider is How does what is to come in the future impact my life today? As we live our lives today, what we anticipate in the future, ought to manifest itself through our lives today.

- We ought to be people of integrity – true to our core. We don’t compromise on our principles.
- We ought to be manifesting in our lives the Righteousness and Faithfulness of our King
- We need to recognize God’s concern for the Creation and working to reverse the impact of sin on creation. We must take responsibility for the care of the planet.
- And we must be announcing the gospel to all the nations. Jesus’ last command before He ascended into heaven was to “Go into the world and make disciples of all nations.”

Blessing: May he, whose Second Coming in power and great glory we await, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in Love. Amen