

Son of David

Isaiah 11:1-10

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Continuing our series in the oracles of Isaiah, we come now to the prophesy of Jesus' kingly rule as the Son of David, the shoot from the stump of Jesse. Last week we discussed the fact that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the one who is to come and bring peace to His people. And that peace is not the peace of the world, but the peace of His forgiveness, the peace of His reconciliation which He has won for us on the cross. Now, as those who live in His peace, we stand in awe of the King of Kings who has come into the world as the babe in Bethlehem and will come again to inaugurate His eternal kingdom.

Jesus Christ is the Son of David, the rightful heir to the throne of God. His earthly father, Joseph, was "of the house and lineage of David," as recorded in Luke 2:4, and in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. And since His mother was married into the line of kings, He is indeed the Son of David. He is the Messiah who will sit on the throne of David as He rules the people in peace forever, as Isaiah 9:7 records. This descendant of the great king of Israel is a shoot that will come from a stump of the tree of the kingly line, and this tree has been cut down by the Lord for its apostasy and ignorance of His will. The axe was taken to it when Yahweh gave up His people into captivity in Babylon, and the last king of Israel was unseated from the throne. But that throne was an earthly one. It was one of temporal rule, and as Jesus' own words declare, His kingdom is not of this world.

The throne upon which the Christ will sit is the throne of heaven. That is the rightful place of the Son of God as He rules over the affairs of the world for the benefit of our salvation. The simple fact that it is a "tender shoot" is evidence enough that this is different than what was there before. This tender shoot comes out of the stump, as a new and green branch that bears fruit from the otherwise dead roots of the line of kings. The tree is not reinvigorated, remade, or resurrected, but a new tree of a different kind now rises from the roots of the old tree. Any idea that the Messiah was coming to reestablish the old order of kings is thrown out by a proper understanding of this prophesy from Isaiah. And this reality applies to us as much as it did to the people from the time of Isaiah to Jesus.

Jesus Christ is King over all things, but His kingdom is not of this world. He did not come to bring peace to the world, but to those who are His called children. To make

Him a God of prosperity and good in the worldly things of this life is to abandon the entire reason He was incarnate. He came into the world to redeem His people and begin a peace that could not have been achieved from an earthly throne of kings. As the true Son of David, which the people proclaim Him to be as He rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He has the Spirit of the Lord upon Him. And not just upon Him, but He and the Spirit are one, just as He and the Father are one. This reality is what allows Him to rule in the way that Isaiah describes.

He has come to judge the people with righteousness, not by what His eyes see. If we were to be judged by what His eyes see, we would find ourselves receiving the fire of His wrath and not His mercy because of our unrighteousness. We only receive the peace He promises because of His great mercy. He looks upon us and He does not see our wretchedness and filth, but only the righteousness which He has imputed to us as a gift. And those who reject Him and His divine rule will face the judgment of His mouth when He strikes the earth with authority and destroys the wicked with just a word. But for those who have been given peace and love under His divine rule, the new creation will abound in great paradoxes of logic.

The wolf and the lamb will dwell together. The leopard and the young goat will lie down together. The calf and the lion will coexist in peace. This is not a promise of earthly peace as many modern preachers will tell you. This is not an adjuration from Isaiah that if you “give yourself to the Lord” then all the bad things of the world will turn good. This speaks of a peace beyond our understanding as those who remain in the sinful flesh. The prophet speaks of what is to come in the new heaven and the new earth, in the new creation that has been restored to its original righteousness. For in that day, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,” and He will be fully revealed. Advent is a season which points us to the truth of His coming to bring this peace at the end of all things, just as much as it is pointing us to rejoice in the birth of our Savior.

It is a dichotomous season full of preparation and rejoicing as we prepare for the coming of the Lord on the clouds of heaven. We must be like the 5 wise virgins who prepared their oil and kept their lamps lit as they awaited the coming of the bridegroom, always on guard for His coming and prepared for it to happen at any moment. So how do we prepare for the coming of the Son of David, the King of Kings? We live lives of repentance and receive the gift of forgiveness which He gives to us in Word and Sacrament. These Means of Grace are what keep us strengthened and keep our lamps full of oil as we wait. Nothing we do to prepare ourselves will suffice, and if we neglect to come to receive His gifts, we will find ourselves scrambling at the last minute like the foolish virgins who missed His coming and were not allowed in by the bridegroom.

Preparing for the coming of the Lord must always be on our minds, not just at Advent, but this season reminds us that He is indeed coming again, and when He does it will be to establish an eternal peace over which He will rule for all eternity. And we, too, will rule that peace with Him, side by side with the Son of David as His brothers. We need not fear the coming of our Savior, for He has prepared us in our baptisms, and continues to prepare us by giving us the sustenance our spirits need to persevere as we wait. He is the almighty Son of God, and it is His power that sustains us in this life and will sustain us in the life to come. Do not lose sight of that blessed truth and turn to yourself as the answer to your problems, and do not turn to the world for the answers you seek. Our answers lie in the blood of Jesus, who has come into the world to redeem us from the scourge of sin, and has given Himself as the perfect sacrifice to bring peace to His creation.

In the day of His coming, that tender shoot will stand as a signal for the people, for His people, that peace has been given and is theirs for all eternity. He will bring to all who trust in Him for their salvation an eternal peace, but for those who deny Him He will bring eternal wrath and separation from the peace of God. The only-begotten Son of the Father has come in the manger, and will come again in glory as He brings us the consummation of our faith in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. Look to the Lord for your needs, and look to Him for the forgiveness that He has won on your behalf, because it is only there that you will find it, and only in Him that the assurance of your eternity lies. He has ascended His heavenly throne, and when the Son of David returns, His eternal throne will be all around us as we dwell in His glory forever with all those who have faith in Him. Amen.