

Dec. 7, 2014 – Isaiah 11:1-4 (OT: Isaiah 40:1-11 Epistle: 2 Peter 3:8-14 Gospel: Mark 1:1-8)

ISAIAH'S ROYAL PROPHECIES
II. This King Will Bring Forth Justice

Last week we looked at Isaiah's prophecy of the King who will bring us true peace – peace with God, peace from God, and finally everlasting peace in God kingdom. This week we to turn to Isaiah 11:1-4 and read that this King will bring forth justice.

Does life sometimes seem unfair? We get sick, have accidents, suffer wrongs, and experience any number of difficulties during our lives. This sinful world is against us, as are the devil and his evil angels. Our sinful natures with their lusts war against our souls. Things can seem hopeless, but these words recorded by Isaiah give us hope.

The previous chapter of Isaiah talks about the Assyrians who were coming to fight against and defeat Israel. They were a mighty nation, but God said not to fear them (Isaiah 10:24). While they would strike Israel with a rod and lift up their staff against God's people, God would eventually cut them down like a great forest (Isaiah 10:34).

But what would become of God's people? Only a remnant would be left (Isaiah 10:20-22). Instead of a forest, there would only be a dead stump or a stem. It seemed that God's promises of a Messiah would not come to pass. But "*there shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots*" (v. 1).

Jesse was the father of King David. It was from Jesse, who lived in Bethlehem (1 Samuel 17:12), that God promised to bring forth a new King, a new David who would shepherd His people (Ezekiel 34:23-24, see also Jeremiah 30:9). Jesse's line was all but wiped out, but God doesn't need a lot to work with. He can cause the deadest stump to bring forth new growth.

And that is what we will celebrate in a few short weeks: the Baby that was born in Bethlehem, the Branch that grew from Jesse roots. He is the promised King. And as we read here Isaiah, this King will bring forth justice.

We are often bothered when things are not just, especially if the injustice was done to us! Even if we are not personally involved, we can get upset and angry. You cannot read or watch the news these days without hearing about the events that have happened in Ferguson MO these past few weeks. The verdict of the grand jury has led to protests across the nation. A protest in Philadelphia even interrupted the annual Christmas tree lighting there. No matter what your opinion is of what has happened, these events show how important justice can be to us.

These events also remind us of the limitation of earthy judges and juries. Earthy judges and jurors base their decisions on what they see and hear. Witnesses, however, can lie or be mistaken. Evidence can be lost, overlooked, or give the wrong impression.

But the Judge from the root of Jesse has none of these problems! Verse 3 says: "*And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears.*" Jesus, being God, is all-knowing. And as we see in v. 2, the Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him – the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding. He has no need to judge by what He sees or hears, as He knows everything and can judge perfectly. As we are told in John 2:24b-25 "*He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.*"

But that brings us to a problem. If you were to appear before a judge who knew everything about you and even knew your thoughts, how would you fare in his judgment? Think of some of the things you have done when no one else was around. Think of some of the things you have said

behind someones back, or even hurtful words you may have said to someone's face. Think of all the thoughts you have had that you are glad no one else knows about.

God has seen everything that you have done; He has heard everything you have ever said; and He knows every thought you have had. Considering this, would you be one of the poor and meek in verse 4 that Jesus will judge with righteousness and equity or one of the wicked that He will slay with the breath of His lips? If we are honest, we will admit that have all sinned belong with the wicked.

But this King was born in Bethlehem not to judge the world but to save it (John 12:47). That is what He did by living a life based on the knowledge and fear of the Lord, a life that was without sin. He laid down His life on the cross to die for you and me – to take away and forgive your sins. His just life is counted as your own so that you are declared just and righteous in God's sight.

We, the wicked, really have been slain *“with the breath of His lips”* (v. 4). By the Word of God we believe in what Jesus has done for us (Romans 10:17) and know *“that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin”* (Romans 6:6). You can say with Paul, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

Jesus has also made you a new creation, *“created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”* (Ephesians 4:24). Through the washing and regeneration of baptism you have received the same Spirit of the Lord that rested upon Him: *“The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”* This Spirit produces in you the righteousness and justice that God requires.

So in reality you and I are the poor that this King shall judge. We are poor because by nature we lack the righteousness we need to please God. Jesus will come again to judge us *“with righteousness”* but not the righteousness that we have ourselves, as we have none, but with the righteousness which He gives us.

This is another reason *“He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears.”* While Jesus sees and hears all of our sins, He does not judge us by our sins. Through His death He removed our sins from us *“as far as the east is from the west”* (Psalm 103:12). Instead He now judges you by His perfectly just life that He lived for you. And that judgement is in your favor, as *“His delight is in the fear of the Lord”* – the fear of the Lord which the Spirit creates in you.

This King has brought forth justice in you, but you can still suffer injustice in this world. Jesus warned His disciples that they will be hated because they are not of the world (John 15:18-19). And He said, *“If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you”* (John 15:20). 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us, *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* Nevertheless, there is reason to hope, for this King will also bring forth justice for you.

Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead (John 5:27-29). He will *“decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.”* He will right every wrong and destroy every enemy.

While we look forward to the justice He brings, it is important to remember that He is the one who bring this justice. We are not to avenge ourselves, but leave that up to God. *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,”* says the Lord. (Romans 12:19). Instead we are to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who persecute us and take

advantage of us (Matthew 5:44). Our desire should not be for someone to “get what they deserve” but rather we are to have the same goal as God: for all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

God has given us powerful weapons to use against our adversaries: prayer, and, as we see here, the Word of God – “*the breath of His lips*” with which “*He shall slay the wicked.*” It is by God’s Word that even the Antichrist will be consumed when Jesus returns: “*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming*” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

While the world may go to court, write editorials, or stage protests to try to accomplish justice, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 reminds us: “*though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*” We are sent to teach God’s Word and trust that Spirit of God will use His Word to bring people to Jesus, the King who bring will forth justice in them just as He has done for us.

Other people are not the only cause of the “injustice” we experience here on earth. We face the devil and his demons who accuse us before God and try to lead us astray. We fight against our sinful flesh and its lusts. We experience sickness and pain and live under the shadow of our approaching death. When Jesus returns all these will be done away with in His justice. Our sinful flesh will be no more. The devil and his angels will be thrown into everlasting fire prepared for them (Matthew 25:41) and the last enemy that will be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). There will no longer be anything or anyone to harm us.

So when things seem hopeless, and it looks like all that we have is a dead stump, remember what God has done and promises to do. Remember the promised Branch from the root of Jesse who was born in Bethlehem, the King who brings forth justice in you. He is coming again to bring forth justice for you by destroying all your enemies. We pray: “come, Lord Jesus!” Amen.

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