
True Justice and Peace from a Plant (Isaiah 11:1-10)
12/4/2016 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



Our most recent election is now over and done. Preparations are beginning for the new president to take over his new duties. And the question is: what will his presidency look like? Many have their ideas now, but how will people view him as time moves forward? How will history look at his efforts decades down the line?

Will he do what is right? Will he help and protect the weak? Will he bring us to war or bring us peace? There are a lot of questions about our new leader.

Today, as we continue our Christmas with Isaiah, we hear him describe our one true King. He's not like any other leader you and I have seen or heard or read about. Today, Isaiah shows us that we can find True Justice and Peace from a Plant. Today, Isaiah points us to Jesus Christ whom he calls the Root of Jesse. He is a leader unlike any other.

Isaiah tells us that *a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse*. God was the one who cut down that tree. Even though God had promised that King David would never fail to have a king on the throne, God turned his kingly lineage into nothing more than a dead stump.

Why? Because the kings of David's line got proud. They got big heads. They stopped paying attention to what God wanted and what God said. They figured that they knew things well enough. So God humbled them. God took away their glory. May we learn the lesson, humble ourselves, and heed God's Word before he makes us.

But God had still promised that a king would come from David's line, so God fulfilled that. But he did not send a King to reign in palaces, to judge in great courthouses, and to wage war against the nations of the world. No, instead, God saw fit to bring his people back to their humble roots. Notice the shoot comes up from the stump of Jesse, not David. David was a king, but his father Jesse was just an average citizen whose son watched sheep.

And so we see that fulfilled in the birth of that King, our King, Jesus. He was born and not laid in a royal cradle in a palace, but he was laid in a feeding trough in a stable. Yet, despite his humble circumstances, this would be the greatest King ever.

Isaiah continues on to tell how *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him*. And Isaiah explains that. The Spirit of God would give this King *wisdom*. Wisdom is knowledge applied. You ever meet someone who is incredibly smart, that is, book smart, but dumb as a rock when it comes to normal life? This King is not like that. He knows how to use his knowledge to get what he wants. He is able to grasp the essence of things and know how to address them.

This King is *understanding*. He gets it. He knows how two different circumstances are different. He knows what you are going through. He doesn't just make snap judgments without hearing you out. He understands matters when he deals with them.

The Spirit gives *counsel*. Our King is able to give us advice for what we are going through. And he does that through the pages of Scripture. Did you know that there are unbelievers who care nothing about God yet who still read the Bible because they believe it has such valuable life advice?

Our King has the *Spirit of Might*. He's able to get things done! He's able to protect his people! He's able to give us what we need! He can accomplish what he sets out to do!

Our King has *knowledge and the fear of the LORD*. Those two really go together. Anyone who knows anything should get that an almighty God ought to be respected, ought to be feared. What he wants and does not want should be important to all of us.

And our King is consumed with zeal for doing God's will. He *delights in the fear of the LORD*. We even hear in the gospels as Jesus says that his very food and drink are to do the will of his father. That was what sustained him. That was what delighted him. That delight can be ours as well. That's something worth pursuing and praying for.

This King will *judge* perfectly. He does not judge based on false perceptions. He does not judge based on first impressions. He judges based on truth, based on justice, based on what actually is right. So many rulers take advantage of the poor and the weak. That has been the case throughout history. But our King will give

them what is right.

And God rules us, his people, with justice. As we dig into God's Word and as God works on our hearts, we begin to understand what is truly right, what is truly just, and so we too stop judging just by hearsay, just by what we think we see, and we learn what is just.

And *he will punish the wicked*, not with whippings or beatings, but with the words of his mouth, the breath of his lips. Remember God's Word. God's Word is what created the world. God calls his Word, the Bible, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing through even soul and spirit. What a terrifying thing to have that Word turned against you!

Isaiah says our King will wear *two belts*. One is *righteousness*. Our King does what is right and he demands that everyone else do what is right. All who have done what is right will be rewarded and all who have done wrong will be punished. God is serious about his Word and about his Law, and all who have been disobedient to both will receive what they deserve.

All the more reason for us to fear the LORD. A righteous King who demands that everyone be righteous will not let the smallest indiscretion go unpunished. And who of us can say that we have done everything God demands? Who of us can even say we have paid enough attention to God's Word to know all he demands? He is a King to be feared.

But he is also a King to be loved. He was wearing two belts, we said. And though the first is *righteousness*, the other is *faithfulness*. Our King has been faithful to his promises to us. In fact, our King, our Jesus Christ is the very one who took that just punishment for all of our sins, from our smallest indiscretions to our greatest crimes. Our great King is not only a just King who gives people what they deserve, but he is also a gracious King who declares sinners not guilty because he himself took what we deserved from us and he gives us the rewards that he has earned.

This is a King like this who can bring true peace. Isaiah describes this peace as one that reaches even to the animal kingdom. Carnivores will no longer war against their prey but will instead be at peace with those animals they before devoured.

This total peace is the peace that you and I have by knowing the King of Righteousness *and* Faithfulness. This is the peace that we know from sins forgiven. This is the peace that we enjoy from knowing that God has opened heaven for us and no one can take that away from us.

No wonder the nations will rally to the Root of Jesse! Here, we find a King who can give us what is truly right, he is a King who stands for something. And we also find a King who can give us grace. He gives us forgiveness that fills our lives with a lasting joy. Who knew we could find true justice and peace from a plant? Amen.