

The Promise of Peace

By Mark Jarvinen

Isaiah 11:1-10 (NIV)

The Branch From Jesse

- 1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
- 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -
- 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
- 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
- 5 Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
- 6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
- 7 The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
- 8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
- 9 They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.
- 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the
nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

In the real world of today, we're a long way from the vision of the 19th century painter, **Edward Hicks**, whose works included "**The Peaceable Kingdom**," which portrayed an assortment of animals, wild and domesticated, all lying down together in the same pasture. Hicks based his portrait on today's text from **Isaiah 11**, which speaks not only of the **birth of Christ**, but also of the lamb lying down with the lion, a depiction of **Christ's future reign on earth**, as mentioned in Revelation 20. Isaiah declares to us the coming of the **Prince of Peace**, the promised Messiah, who is the source of the everlasting peace for which every human heart looks and longs. **How can we find the kind of peace that Isaiah promises will be ours in His coming Kingdom?**

- I. **By Knowing the Prince of Peace (v. 1).**
 - II. **By Understanding the Source of Peace (vv. 2-5).**
 - III. **By Awaiting the Restoration of Peace (vv. 6-10).**
-

BACKGROUND

In order to understand today's text, a bit of **historical background** is necessary. The political climate in the divided Kingdom of the Jewish people – **Israel**, the 10 tribes to the north; and **Judah**, the 2 tribes to the south - had been relatively peaceful during Isaiah's childhood, until **745 B.C.** when **Assyria**, (modern day northern Iraq) under a new, power seeking king, began to assert itself in the region. By **722 B.C.**, Judah, the southern kingdom of the Jews, had actually joined forces with Assyria, to overcome the northern kingdom of Israel (a move that was condemned by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 7). The **2 southern tribes** called **Judah**, had "**slept with the enemy**" so to speak, which ultimately left its capital city, Jerusalem, vulnerable to Assyrian siege in **701 B.C.** However,

through the prayers of Judah's then King Hezekiah, God compelled Assyria to withdraw. Nonetheless, Jerusalem fell to **Babylon**, a new world super-power, in **586 B.C.**, some 140 years later. Although the fall of Jerusalem, and the southern kingdom of Judah, took place well beyond Isaiah's lifetime, the prophet had nevertheless predicted the coming of that day during his own prophetic ministry a century and a half earlier.

This leads us into our text, which answers the question: "**How can we know the peace that Isaiah promises will one day be ours?**" First of all ...

I. BY KNOWING THE PRINCE OF PEACE (v.1).

Verse 1 says -

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."

What is meant by this peculiar reference to the dynasty of King David as "***the stump of Jesse?***" Jesse was David's father and this is the only time in the **OT** that David's royal line is called by his father's name instead of his own. The reason for this reference to Jesse, according to Isaiah, is that the promise of the Messiah coming through David's kingly line, (**II Samuel 7:16**), was now being temporarily cut off, due to the sinful rebellion of God's people, leaving behind only the stump of the family tree.

But ***Isaiah 11:1*** is Isaiah's prediction of David's family line being one day restored through a "***shoot***" or "***Branch***" that would spring forth from the stump of Jesse. In our Bibles, the word "***Branch***" is

capitalized because it is referring to none other than **the Lord Jesus Christ**, was called the “**Prince of Peace**” in **Isaiah 9:6**. The message for Israel is filled with hope because it suggests that **what God cuts off, He also restores**. The good news for Israel in this passage is that the God who judges His people for their sins, is also the God who forgives them and restores Peace (Oneness). Isaiah wants Israel to know this coming Prince of Peace. What was good news for God’s people then, is also good news for us today. After all, “**from Jesse’s roots a Branch will bear fruit.**” That Branch is Jesus and all believers in Him are the fruit. That’s us!

Many people today, all across the world, still need to know this “**Branch,**” this “**Prince of Peace.**” Missionary **Don Richardson**, who served for many years as a missionary among the primitive tribes of **Papua New Guinea**, wrote a book entitled “**The Peace Child.**” He writes how in translating the Scriptures into the native tribal language, he could find no words to express how Jesus Christ came to give His life that we might have peace with God. In his book, he relates how he finally found the answer in the culture of the native people themselves.

He tells the story of two tribes who had maintained a **blood feud** between themselves for several generations. Each generation fought and nursed their wounds only to fight again, killing and maiming more and more people. Finally, after years of struggle, the two tribes realized that they must stop fighting before they annihilated each other. But what could they do to end the years of fighting between them? According to missionary Richardson, the two chiefs met and

one of them brought his newborn infant son. The one chief presented his son to the chief of the opposing tribe and asked him to raise his child as if he were his own. As long as the child lived, the two chiefs promised that their tribes would live in peace with one another. The child was called **“The Peace Child,”** and provided Richardson with a perfect illustration of God’s love for us in sending His newborn Son, the Prince of Peace, to provide forgiveness and reconciliation for us.

This morning you may feel cut off, like the people of Israel. Perhaps your dreams, your hopes, your aspirations, seem to have disappeared – gone up in smoke. All that seems left is a **“stump”** of unrealized expectations. **God wants you to know today, just as sure as He provided a Branch from the stump of Jesse, that He is the restorer of dreams, hopes, and aspirations through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Not only do we need to know the Prince of Peace, we will find peace

II. BY UNDERSTANDING THE SOURCE OF PEACE (vv. 2-5).

With Assyria knocking at the door, Israel needed peace. They lived in constant peril and insecurity. Yet, they refused to turn from their sinful ways and humble themselves before God. Isaiah showed them that the source of lasting peace was the **“Branch”** of the Lord and that the way to appropriate this lasting peace was to repent and turn to Him.

In **v. 2**, Isaiah enumerates the qualifications of the “**Branch,**” who is the Messiah. The Spirit of the Lord (an OT reference to the Holy Spirit) will rest on Him and He will be filled with:

- **The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding** - to make Him wise in practical knowledge and righteous in His decisions.
- **The Spirit of Counsel and Power** – to enable Him to give good advice to others and the strength to carry out His decisions.
- **The Spirit of Knowledge and The Fear of the Lord** – that He will have Knowledge of God’s will and a reverence for God in carrying out His plans.

Then in **vv. 4-5** Isaiah indicates several characteristics of the Messiah’s rule:

- **Righteousness and justice for the poor,**
- **Tough standards of law enforcement on the wicked,**
- **Firm stability in the social order.**

These standards were in stark contrast to the state of affairs in which Israel was currently living. God’s covenant had been shelved by Israel. Justice had been perverted among God’s people and consequently, His hand of blessing had been removed; causing Israel to live in constant fear of the neighboring nations, resulting in a lack of peace or national security. The nation of Israel as a whole would have to be punished, but as Isaiah **10:20-21** predicts, a remnant would remain faithful and be the people through whom God would carry out His plans for Israel –

“In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down (the king of Assyria) but will truly rely on the Lord, the holy one of

Israel. A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God.”

Today, we too live in a world in which injustice and unrighteousness abound. We too long for peace and security. The atrocities of Hitler’s Germany, the racism of South African Apartheid, and the love/hate relationships between Bosnians and Serbs, are just a few examples from more recent history of how hatred and injustice can spring up in any generation, and in any part of the world.

Even as individuals, we too experience injustice and unrighteousness in everyday life, whether we’re on the giving or receiving end. Perhaps we’ve been betrayed by someone close, or stabbed in the back by a colleague. At other times, we have been unrighteous in our dealings with others – making people the subject of our gossip, or false accusations. Not only have we been sinned against, we have sinned against others in our thoughts, words, and deeds. In today’s text, we see how Israel refused to repent and experienced God’s hand of judgment as a result. **The only way to live in peace is to turn from our stubborn and self-centered ways and rely on the Lord (like the remnant of Israel). We too need to repent that we might find peace.** Do you need peace this Advent season? Again, the Lord invites us to acknowledge our sin, and turn to Christ, our source of peace and reconciliation with God and others.

And so, we need to know the Prince of Peace, to understand how He is the source of our lasting peace, and ultimately to find peace ...

III. BY AWAITING THE RESTORATION OF PEACE (vv. 6-10).

In **vv. 6-10**, Isaiah's prophecy goes far beyond the immediate context of Israel's time and even beyond the birth of Christ. In these verses, Isaiah looks far into the future and predicts the establishment of ***Christ's Kingdom*** and the restoration of universal peace, the kind of peace known in the Garden of Eden.

This future kingdom will be experienced in three ways:

- **Vv. 6-8 – There will be a restoration of peace in nature.** “The wolf will live with the lamb, the lion will eat straw like the ox, an infant will play near the hole of the cobra.”
- **V. 9 – There will be a restoration of peace over the earth and natural elements.** “For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”
- **V. 10 - There will be a restoration of peace over the Nations.** “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him.

In giving us this picture of the future Kingdom of the Messiah, Isaiah looks beyond the scope of Israel's sin and her coming judgment. ***We learn from this that even when God speaks of judgment, He also offers the hope of restoration to His people.*** Israel isn't just to be destroyed and forgotten. No. The day is coming when sin will cease to prevail, when judgment will give way to forgiveness and instead of violence, peace will cover the earth.

CONCLUSION

This is a reality that won't take shape until Jesus comes again in all His glory. In that day, the nations will bow before Him. Yet, this coming day of perfect peace points us in the right direction even

today on a personal level. Because our lives have been grafted into the “**Branch**” that came forth from the stump of Jesse, giving us peace with God, we look to live in peace with others. The words of *Psalm 34:14* come to mind for me – “***Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.***” How can we pursue peace in our daily lives? **Speak the truth in love. Keep short accounts with others. Be angry, but sin not. Don’t let the sun go down on your anger. Don’t let a root of bitterness take hold of your heart.** Scripture is filled with directives on how to pursue peace.

But still our best efforts fall short. We don’t always seek peace and pursue it. We often live in denial over our problems. We pretend our relationships are better than they are. We sweep problems under the rug and hope they’ll go away. We allow seeds of bitterness, resentment, hatred, and even violence to take root and grow in our hearts. Rather than working through relationships, we withdraw, licking our wounds and nursing our grudges, rehearsing again and again the ways in which others have wronged us. Even as Christians, we don’t always live in peace with others as we should.

Today, a big burden can be lifted from our shoulders – the burden of an unforgiving spirit, the burden of despair, the burden of anxiety, the burden of guilt. **In our mind’s eye, we go to the manger where the Christ child was born and behold God’s gift of love. Then journey to the cross, where the Savior was crucified and there behold His sacrifice. See Jesus. Let the Prince of Peace, who has come, and is coming again, restore unto you the peace that is your birthright as God’s child. A-men.**