

# **Christmas Fit for a King**

## **The King of Lasting Peace**

### **December 4, 2022**

**Overarching Theme:** 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

#### **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

#### **Core Point:**

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “*the year of the Lord’s favor*” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this year and always.

#### **Reflect on this Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10**

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and 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 kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.*

### **Commentary:**

"A shoot will burst forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch will surge out of his roots" (1:11). Why the relatively obscure Jesse of Bethlehem instead of his son, the most famous King of Israel, David? It could be that the prophet harkens back not to David himself, but the king's father, precisely to suggest that in some sense he does not envision another David at all (with all of David's baggage – see 2 Samuel 11ff for detail), but rather a new and better David, a significant improvement on the first model yet still arising from the same stump, thus fulfilling YHWH's early promise of a line of kings from Jesse (see 2 Samuel 7 for the rationale for this belief).

This new branch will have the requisite qualities from YHWH that will promise at last a kingship worthy of its name. "The spirit (*ruach*) of YHWH will rest on him, a spirit of discerning wisdom, a spirit of tenacious counsel, a spirit of a fearsome knowledge of YHWH" (Is. 11:2). These famous lines have been translated rather differently than they are usually read. In Hebrew, as in Greek, there is a grammatical structure known as hendiadys, where two nouns are joined together with the very simple connector "and." In such a case one of the nouns may be seen to modify the other, playing the role of an adjective, perhaps as a means of strengthening the central idea being conveyed. Hence, here I suggest that this new shoot of Jesse will possess *extraordinarily discerning wisdom*, and *unbending counsel* (the word means "warrior-like"), and a *truly fearsome knowledge* of YHWH. By "fearsome" I do not mean terrifying but rather mighty (the word means something more like "awe").

Echoing coronation Psalm 72, Isaiah promises that "his delight will be (only) in the awe of YHWH," (because) "he will not judge by what his eyes see or decide by the hearing of his ears; (instead) with righteousness he will judge the poor and decide uprightly for the meek of the earth" (Is. 11:3-4a). This new king will not rely on traditional ways of judgment, but will go far beyond his predecessors, bending over backward on behalf of the poor and the meek, making certain that justice is offered to them, despite those who would deny it to them. Plainly, Isaiah claims that kings too often have offered so-called justice to those who, like them, are rich and powerful.

And his strength will be displayed in a much different way, too. "He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath (spirit) of his lips he will kill the wicked" (Is. 11:4b). This new king will not come with sword and shield but with words whose great strength and truth will be more than enough to tame and make ineffective any who would stand in his way,

a way motivated entirely by "righteousness and faithfulness," both of which are said to encircle him like a belt (Is. 11:5).

And with the coming of the new king, the creation itself will be transformed. The animals that are natural enemies—wolf and lamb, leopard and goat, calf and lion—will crouch down together in peace and contentment, all tended and lead by a tiny child (Is. 11:6). Portraits of this "peaceable kingdom" are ubiquitous in the iconography of Christianity as wild and domesticated creatures laze against one another while a child gambols about them all.

This season we simply cannot give up the reality of this bold dream. It is this conviction, this certainty of God's desire for the cosmos that lures us onward into joining the journey toward that reality. This is the reason for Advent and Christmas and Lent and Easter, and the whole Christian thing. God has plans for us, and we are asked to join in the growth of this shoot. The new king is coming, and he will usher in a new cosmos one shoot at a time. Even in the midst of life's stumps, may we search for these shoots of justice and peace, water them and pray for them this Advent and always.

- Adapted from [patheos.com/progressive-christian/2013/12/wolves-lambs-leopards-john-holbert-12-03-2013](http://patheos.com/progressive-christian/2013/12/wolves-lambs-leopards-john-holbert-12-03-2013)– John Holbert

### **Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. Recalling the failures of Israel's kings, priests and people, God's work often seems to begin among the stumps of human failure and rebellion. Can you think of a 'stump' in your own experience that has led to God's gracious work?
2. Why would God bring forth a shoot from seemingly common Jesse (rather than from his more famous son, King David)? In contrast with David, what will this new 'shoot' be known for?
3. Why do you think this new king prioritizes the poor? From descriptions of his weaponry (words of truth rather than traditional armaments) what kind of battle will this King wage?
4. Consider the 'peaceable kingdom' image. What is most striking about this future kingdom?
5. How did King Jesus begin to usher in this kingdom one shoot at a time? How are we to be shoot 'searchers' and encouragers today?

### **Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: *Isaiah 11:9-10 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.*