

2014_12_17 Midweek Advent 3
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
Pastor David Pfeiffer

Midweek Advent Series:
WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

Isaiah Foretells A King

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| 1. A King Who Is "God with Us" – Isaiah 7:14 | (12/3) |
| 2. A King Who Rules with Justice – Isaiah 9:6-7 | (12/10) |
| 3. A King Who Is Righteous – Isaiah 11:1-5 | (12/17) |
| 4. A King Who Accomplishes Peace – Isaiah 11:6-16 | (12/25) |

3. A King Who Is Righteous

Isaiah 11:1-5

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Grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus who knew no sin, but became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Amen.

Isaiah 11:1–5

- There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
- 2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest 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.
- 3 His delight *is* in the fear of the Lord,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
- 4 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 slay the wicked.
- 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

Lord, sanctify us by Your truth; Your Word is truth. Amen.

In the name of our King, dear fellow disciples of Christ,

Speaking as a father of four, I can tell there are no two exact duplicates. Each child is unique. We see them develop their unique characteristics. We see them develop their unique interests.

Each child is unique, but this Child which Isaiah pictures is truly unique. His interests are so different than what we are used to. What child is this who lays to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet While shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the King – a unique Child to say the least.

We continue our Advent series tonight by yet again seeing Christmas through the eyes of Isaiah. And tonight we look deeper into the Christmas scene Isaiah depicts, to see not just His nature, not just His rule, but to see within this King, to consider how He develops into a truly unique Child among all children, unique among all kings. We consider His unique interests, we look into the very heart of this King, and we ask the question: What Child is this?

King Ahaz had his own set of unique interests. His interest was self-preservation. When it came dealing with the LORD, he would rather rely on himself and his own calculating interests than to rely on the LORD's interests. That is to say, a spirit of self-interest rested upon him, a spirit of self-preservation, a spirit of self-made righteousness.

Judah was threatened on all sides. To the south, the Philistines and Egyptians; to the north, Israel had allied forces with Syria; to the far north the Assyrian empire was reaching the height of its world-wide dominion; and that is not to mention the threat on the horizon in the east – the Babylonian forces that would eventually bring Judah to their knees.

So where would Ahaz turn? Where would we turn? Where do we turn when pressed in on all sides? Where we turn shows where our interests lie. At times, the LORD allows evil to surround us in order to bring us to our knees; he allows difficulties to press upon, to threaten our comforts, to threaten our accomplishments, threaten our goals and future; because he wants to find out where our interests lie. In self-preservation? Or in self-sacrifice?

Ahaz had his own interest in mind when he traveled up to Assyria. He traveled up to Assyria in search of an alliance. And to his knees he would go, but not before the LORD. Instead, he bowed before the king of Assyria, offering to be his servant, as long

as he would spare Judah. But he was only interested in saving himself, not his people. He was anointed with a spirit of self-interest.

And so often isn't that the case? When a tough situation or temptation confronts us, we try to travel the way that serves our best interest rather than the interests of God. Maybe not before another king, but to our knees we go before other things – we become interested in revenge, or gossip, or greed, or anger, or bitterness, and we are only interested in ourselves.

So God would swing the axe. Isaiah writes: "The LORD of hosts, will chop off the branches with terrifying power and the tall trees will be cut down." This axe of the LORD would cut Israel and Judah at their knees. The dynasty of King David would topple, and Judah and Israel were taken into captivity. Nothing more than a stump was left.

For over 4 centuries the royal lineage would be nothing more than a dying stump ... the roots were all that remained of Jesse's lineage ... until a sprout would spring forth. Verse 11 is better pictured as this: a sprout springing forth from a nearly dead stump. From the stump of Jesse, springs forth a sprout. Jesse was the father of King David. That was how deeply the axe had wounded the royal dynasty. David was the first king of Judah. But this axe would be laid so deeply, that it would leave the royal lineage all but dead; it was a return to the root: to Jesse, the father of the first king in Judah, the father of king David. From this stump, a sprout would spring forth. A second David, a king to sit on His throne. One which would come with a personality all his own, a character unique to him alone. A rod from the stem of Jesse.

Unlike King Ahaz who came in a spirit of self-interest, this King would come with the Spirit of the LORD 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.*

He was anointed with the Spirit; he was just baptized and publicly confirmed for the royal calling of Messiah. And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a dove, the Spirit was upon Him and He was driven out into the dry, barren wilderness to face the forces of evil for us. There he was surrounded by evil with all its threats and lures. The devil himself would tempt our King and his heart would be tested.

After 40 days without food, the devil comes to him. He shows him all the kingdoms of the world: the kingdoms which many a “self-interested” king would have given anything to possess; world power! It was meant to bring him to his knees. “Just bow down. If you worship me, then all this is yours.” The devil is interested in just one thing – getting us uninterested in the LORD’s interests and interested in his instead.

But Jesus would not kneel where Ahaz’s had knelt. He would not kneel where you and I have knelt. He was righteous. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and He became the righteous King that Judah never had. He gave His knees to the LORD. “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD God, and Him only shall you serve.” This is our King. The King we need. As the forces of evil pressed in from every side, His heart remained dedicated to the interests of the LORD. A sprout had sprung forth from the stump of Jesse, a king who feared the LORD, a king who was righteous.

Children have their own interests. Some children are really good at sports, others excel at music. Remember picking teams on the playground. If you are the team captain, which kids will you pick first. The uncoordinated one? the kid who is overweight? the smaller kid? No, we want the biggest, the fastest, and the best. Our interests are so often driven by what we see with our eyes.

But do you remember how King David was chosen? Jesse, David’s father, was invited by the prophet Samuel to a sacrifice; a feast of the LORD. Samuel had been instructed by the LORD to anoint a king from among the sons of Jesse. So when Jesse arrived he set his seven sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel could not see the one whom the LORD would anoint. In fact, he was instructed by the LORD not to judge by what he saw. “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature ... for the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

The LORD looks at the heart. And that is how he would choose his king. There was one more. A shepherd. He was out in the field, the youngest and smallest, told to stay behind and tend to the sheep while Jesse went to the feast. Surely Samuel would select one out of his older, stronger, more outgoing sons – not timid David. But yes timid David. For the LORD judges not as we judge; not with His eyes.

How do we choose what is right? Maybe it seems righteousness should be based on how good we look; how dedicated our Christian lives look; how much we give to church; how financially secure our lives are. We want the biggest, the fastest, and the best on our team, and we look down on the slow, the stupid, the small.

But God would choose a shepherd. One of the least of the people. He would choose the most humble of men. From the stump of Jesse a sprout would spring forth and God would anoint Jesus of Nazareth, a man after his own heart, a king who is righteous. A king who does not come for his own self-interest, but comes in complete selflessness; moved with compassion to reach the meek and the humble and the poor in spirit. He comes not for the haughty king of Assyria, but for slow, the stupid, the small; he would go to the blind, the lost, the oppressed, those who have nothing to offer; Jesus came for sinners. Jesus came for you and me.

And this is how he would justify them – with his own righteousness. A righteousness found not in how much he conquered or what reforms he accomplished or how he saved the economy or how he furthered good education and the sciences – but his righteousness was found in a heart that gave. An interest in saving, not surviving. He came not judging what he saw with his eyes; what could serve himself best; he did not decide who should be saved based on what he saw outwardly in people – riches, accomplishments, status; instead he judged by what he saw in people’s hearts; a shepherd. But He judged with righteous judgment, searching out hearts, in search of repentance, humility, coming to those who looked to him for help. And so he gave himself for his people in righteousness, he sacrificed himself for his people; to save the meek, the humble, lowly, the poor; the oppressed; those who have nothing to offer but repentance; he came for the sinner and said to them: “The meek shall inherit the earth.”

*Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.*

Righteousness is about his waist; meaning he is ready, prepared to move and act. Ready for battle. Ready to save you day by day, and come to your aid again and again with His righteousness. A sprout had sprung forth from the stump of Jesse, a unique child; one unlike any other; a king who fears the LORD, whose interest is in saving you, Jesus is a King who is righteous.