

“The Kingdom of Peace” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Advent 2 December 4, 2022

- I. **Isaiah 11:1-10** – previously read
- II. **Colorado will soon reintroduce wolves into the state.**
 - a. A couple of years ago, the voters approved bringing packs of gray wolves back into the state after they were eradicated in the 1940's
 - b. Many people have opinions about the good or bad reasons for adding predators into certain areas, but of course, ranchers were not happy.
 - i. In the new year of 2023, wildlife officials will begin the process of introducing and managing wolf packs.
 - c. This past summer, some wolves showed up early by coming in from Wyoming, and they started picking off cattle from a guy's ranch whom we know – and he was not allowed to stop them or even scare them away by law.
 - i. These wolves are huge animals that dwarf the average dog and can easily overpower the largest of game when they work together.
 - ii. So, this rancher purchased donkeys to protect his cattle, because they seem to have an instinct to protect a herd and will attack predators.
 - d. The point of all this is to say that wolves will be wolves – bears will be bears – mountain lions will be mountain lions – snakes will be snakes – and all of them will be looking for food... which happens to be sheep, cattle, or anything that will work – including you!
 - i. These predators are driven by their very nature to hunt and attack.
- III. **Isaiah paints a very different picture for us today.**
 - a. Isaiah is a prophet who lived about 700 years before Jesus was born, and he's unique because he not only sees the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel, but he looks ahead to the destruction of the southern kingdom of Judah and temple as well.
 - b. The best days, the time of King David, were long over, and the future according to Isaiah is the kings are chopped off and all the glory of the former days looks like a hopeless, dead stump... the line of kings has been cut off.
 - c. Yet, as stumps are known to do, a Shoot will come out from this stump of Jesse (or King David's dad) – and things will change dramatically when that happens.
 - d. This prophecy from Isaiah means that the kingdom will not be forever wiped out when the Assyrians and Babylonians conquer them, but there will be life and a new tree of leadership that arises to accomplish God's purposes.

- i. With that Shoot coming forth, a peace will come to the earth that all people hope for but cannot be attained without divine intervention.
- ii. The wolves, lions, leopards, bears and poisonous snakes will hang out with lambs, goats, calves and even little children and babies – in peace.
- iii. The very nature of these predators will change to stop doing what their nature drives them to do...
- e. Today, as we read this prophecy from Isaiah, just like last week when we read that weapons would be turned into agricultural tools and peace would reign among us, it seems difficult to see the peace of God among us.
- f. No, we make this work in our minds by just saying it will happen when Jesus returns on the Last Day, because we sure can't see it now...
- g. However, the language Isaiah is using is not so much describing the change in animals like lions becoming vegans... but it is describing human beings and the stark contrast before and after Jesus comes!

IV. **We human beings have a certain nature too...**

- a. Our nature is something passed along to us from Adam and Eve as they turned away from God's will and introduced sin into the world.
- b. We have a sinful nature that doesn't go away just because we want to do better, or we try really hard to be good.
- c. Most of us want to see the good in humanity... some tiny bit of goodness in ourselves or in the people around us –
 - i. That's why we hear, "Deep down they are a really good person"... regardless of what they've done...
 - 1. On the news, we constantly see reporters interview family or neighbors of someone accused of a terrible crime, and they say something like, "They might have done a bad thing, but they are a good person with a kind heart."
 - 2. I'm sorry, but we have to realize that no human being on the planet is "good by nature" because we all have the same "sin-sickness" that was inherited by Adam and Eve.
- d. In the same way we want to look at predators like wolves, leopards and bears as cuddly and cute... their nature is to hunt.
 - i. Human beings have a sin nature that will never allow for peace among us... we will always destroy and devour the other guy.
 - ii. We will always look out for our own best interest... fight for our piece of the pie... step on others to get to a better place.
- e. Yet, a Shoot arrived 2000 years ago in the little town of Bethlehem.

V. **Finally, the long awaited King** and Savior would come to change everything.

- a. I should make it clear that the kingdom of peace is here right now.
- b. Last week I said that we often look at these prophecies in Isaiah as a return of Jesus on the Last Day, but when did Jesus come? 2000 years ago!

- c. The Shoot of Jesse made its appearance in just the way you might see a small shoot coming from a stump... it's small and very vulnerable.
 - i. The Son of God was born as a little baby, and needed many years of protection and care by His mom and earthly father, Joseph.
 - 1. He didn't start out as a full grown tree, but lived the same life we do – from birth to death.
- d. The difference between Jesus and us is that He did not inherit the sin sickness we have – but He would be the one to break its hold on us.
 - i. As Jesus grew up to become a man, the prophecy in today's reading was fulfilled that the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him (vs 2)
 - 1. John the Baptist baptized Jesus and Matthew 3:16 says, "the heavens were opened to [Jesus], and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him."
 - 2. Another time, Jesus went to His hometown in Nazareth and read Isaiah 61, which begins, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me..." and I'm here to break the bondage of sin (Luke 4:18ff)
 - ii. Yes, Jesus would break the hold of sin on us by taking it all upon Himself.
 - 1. That is the greatest news of all – that Jesus broke the bondage of sin that we cannot escape on our own – by becoming a sacrifice.
 - 2. John the Baptist would see Jesus in the desert and exclaim that Jesus is the Lamb of God – the one who takes away the sins of the world... (John 1:29)
 - a. In other words, Jesus is the sacrifice that by His blood we may receive the forgiveness of our sins and become right in God's eyes.
 - b. And as we believe in this gift of grace and sacrifice for us, we have entered a new life... of peace.
- e. What Isaiah tells us is when the Christ comes, the things that used to come naturally from our sin nature will change...

VI. **We live in the kingdom of peace... right now.**

- a. Isaiah, just as he saw into the future in last week's reading, sees the Prince of Peace changing the sinful hearts of humanity.
 - i. The average person is ready to devour the other guy – but with Christ in our hearts, we walk in the way of Christ.
 - ii. Rather than break down and destroy, Jesus healed, forgave, and helped people out of the bondage of sin.
 - iii. We have the same role as Christians in this world – we do our part in supporting the people around us in the Church, and the people outside the Church as well.

- b. When Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to the disciples and said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21)
 - i. We also are the ones who bring peace into the world – and no, it’s not perfect peace yet – that day is coming when Jesus returns – but it doesn’t change the fact that Jesus brought the kingdom of peace to us all when He was born.
- c. The Kingdom of Peace has come – and yes, we are at peace with God and each other... Thanks to be to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, amen.