

Each week in Advent has a different one-word theme. Last week was hope. This week is peace. Next week will be joy, and the week after will be love. But this week is peace. Our text from Isaiah 11 shows us a world of peace.

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” Isaiah in chapter 11 talks all about this Shoot of Jesse. 1. (oops!) When the Shoot of Jesse comes, there will be peace. He will be filled with wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, and the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

We understand this to be Jesus, right? 2. (ugh!) Where's my promised peace? We read, **“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them... They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”** Wouldn't that be nice?

Isaiah shows us a world where there is no more violence. Wolves would no longer hunt sheep. Dairy farmers wouldn't need to carry weapons to ward off predators from their herd. You'd save money at the zoo feeding lions grass rather than livestock.

More than that, Isaiah shows a world where there is no more violence. Why? Because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. In a world filled with the knowledge of the Lord, there would be no more school shootings, armed robberies, or domestic violence.

We understand this shoot of Jesse to be Jesus, right? He was born at Christmas, two thousand years ago give or take a few years. Where's the scene Isaiah lays out?

We still live in a world of violence. Just turn on the news and it's all over the place. War still rages in Ukraine. The crime section of the newspaper never has a dull moment. Even within our own households, perhaps there is not the same kind of criminal violence, but we are marked by cruel words, loveless treatment, and anxieties of our own.

It's already December, the irony is that we hardly have a peaceful time at the end of the year as we engage in a frantic rush to Christmas. There are parties to attend, gifts to buy, and travels to book. It might be nice to dream of the world Isaiah paints in Isaiah 11, but that's a fairytale, pastor.

In our moments of doubt, we can wonder if we're barking up the wrong tree with this Christianity thing. Maybe this Shoot of Jesse wasn't Jesus after all, maybe these prophecies were wishful thinking rather than a word from God. We still live in a world of disappointment, sin, and violence.

Our text ends with this promise, **“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his**

resting place shall be glorious.” The key lies in this signal that Isaiah promises. 3. (aha!) The peace is achieved in the root's signal.

This root of Jesse will stand as a signal. Now, Isaiah isn't talking about a radio transmission, but as a sign, a banner, or a flagpole. We see this signal is indeed the cross. Paul writes, **“but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”** What Jesus did by taking on our sins on the cross is for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles.

What Jesus did achieved peace between us and God. Our sins create a dividing wall between us and the perfect and Holy God. You could live in the most serene perfect society, but without that right relationship with God, an eternity of discord in hell awaits. You could be living in a war zone, but even in the midst of bombshells and gunfire, if you have faith in Jesus as your Savior, paradise is open to you, even now. **BECAUSE OF THE ROOT'S SIGNAL, EVEN AS WE WAIT WE HAVE PEACE.**

One day, Jesus will make good on the promises in Isaiah, but we are not there yet. However, 4. (whee!) The shoot brings us peace as we wait. Isaiah promises, **“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”** The picture Isaiah paints is a tiny baby tree growing from a dead stump. If you blink, you'll miss it. If you simply take a glance, you just see a rotten, dead stump, and you'll miss the tiny sapling growing from the base.

In this season of Advent, in this world, Jesus chooses to work in tiny, almost imperceptible ways. We see this in His ministry through coming to this Earth as a tiny baby, through ministering to one relatively small geographic area. Outside of the Bible, hardly any other historians of the time noticed just one more person being crucified. The accounts of His resurrection were dismissed as a fable or myth.

Yet it is through these tiny and imperceptible ways that Jesus is choosing to bring you peace in this season. We gather at the cross, this signal of the root of Jesus, and we have small glimpses of peace, even while we wait for the rest of this prophecy to be fulfilled.

We gather at the cross and wait as the shoot of Jesse speaks through a daily Scripture reading to tell us just what we needed to hear. We gather at the cross and wait as the shoot of Jesse comforts us with calling to mind verses from the Bible that we have learned by heart.

We gather at the cross and wait as we know that through baptism we have been set apart by God. By trusting in the promises that Jesus delivers through baptism, we can take the long view in mind and through this perspective Jesus can make the mountains of our lives into molehills.

We gather at the cross and wait as we come to this place Sunday after Sunday to receive peace upon peace through the words of Scripture applied to our lives and to the words of blessing and forgiveness applied to us.

We gather at the cross and wait as we gather at the rail and the Shoot of Jesse truly comes to us in His very body and blood in, with, and under bread and wine to grant us forgiveness of sins and to proclaim peace with God and peace with our fellow Christian brothers and sisters.

This Advent we reflect on the coming of Jesus, and it doesn't just happen at Christmas. It doesn't happen at His second coming. It happens every day through these simple means that the same spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, and knowledge and fear of the Lord rests upon us and gives us peace.

This Advent, Jesus gives us what we need to get by. However, 5. (yeah!) The shoot will make good on His promises. These promises in Isaiah 11 are no idle fairytale. One day there will be an end to violence. One day the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard with the young goat. No longer will we lose loved ones to disease, disaster, or death. But Jesus calls for us to have faith to trust Him as we wait.

Advent is a season of waiting. And we do wait for Christ's second coming. This is when Christ coming again on the clouds will be the signal for the peoples and his resting place shall be glorious. Then the crown of thorns will be fully revealed as now a crown of gold. Then will we be fully and wholly at peace.

It might seem like a pipe dream. It might seem like wishful thinking, but just as every tree was once a small sapling, so too every gift of God has started out as a vague prophecy, an unattainable wish, or a promise too good to be true.

So gather here with us week after week. Pray fervently day after day because as Paul wrote in Romans 13:11 which we read last week, **“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.”** We are closer to this reality day after day.

The promises God gives us from afar often seem too good to be true. But once God delivers them, we wonder how life could have been without them. They become foregone conclusions. On that day when Christ comes again to make all things right, we will look back and wonder how we could have ever doubted.

Until then, we wait with peace knowing that that peace will be fully delivered to us when the promises of Isaiah 11 are fulfilled in their entirety. Amen!