

Devotion: May 14, 2020 at 12:11:18 PM EDT

Isaiah 11:1-10

The Peaceful Kingdom

1. A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
² 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.
³ 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;
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 kill the wicked.
⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶ 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.
⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
⁹ 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.

10 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.

How many of us say every day. "I hope this is over soon."

The lineage from Jesse, which is not very important to us today, was super-important to the Jews of Jesus' day because it was a reference to Isaiah. The savior to come, Isaiah said, would be from Jesse's line. So, as people began to suspect that Jesus was the messiah, the fact that he was "*of the house and lineage of David*" was huge!

Isaiah went on to say that when this new "shoot" from Jesse reigns, "*the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid ... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.*" This is a world quite unlike today's world. And that's exactly right: it's another world altogether, another kingdom entirely.

But isn't waiting for the other kingdom to come, hopeless? After all we've been waiting for 2020 years. How much hope are we supposed to have?

Biblically speaking, hope, along with faith and love, make up the "big three" of Christianity. They are the things that the apostle Paul said *remain*, that have enduring quality, when all else fails. "*And now faith, hope and love abide,*" is how he put it, and he meant that when looking for the qualities that we learn from the experience of the believing life together, these three things — faith, hope and love — are the solid footing on which to stand.

But when the Bible speaks of hope, it is not talking about the stuff we wish will happen someday. In fact, the Bible is quite clear that some hope is *not* solid ground, but in fact is sinking sand. Hope based on the accumulation of goods or wealth, position or anything else *that is not God* is false hope.

Real hope is not some sort of wishful thinking that those with a strong enough will can come up from some inner core. No, hope is an ultimate belief that when all else fails, when every other support gives way, our lives remain in God's hands.

And so we wait. And this can be difficult.

The Biblical pattern for God's people is a pattern of waiting. Adam waited for a partner, Noah waited for the flood waters to recede, Abraham waited for a son, Jacob waited to marry Rachel, Hannah waited for children, the Israelites waited for deliverance... the list goes on and on. ... In our church, we 'proclaim the mystery of faith' every Communion Sunday morning: "*Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again*" We rightfully pin our hopes on that last claim, and yet, in our humanness, we grow tired of waiting.

That's because we don't live in a culture that helps us to wait well. In fact, just the opposite is true — we live in a culture that worships instant gratification, and teaches me to expect solutions to all of our problems right now. We live in a world where we can order just about anything on Amazon, and find it on our doorstep within 24 hours. A world where we can send a text, an email or a Facebook message across the ocean and have it arrive near-instantaneously. A world where we have 24/7 access to information, healthcare, nourishment and shelter. In this cultural economy, delays are a waste of precious time. Worse, delays are automatic reasons to doubt the love and goodness of God. And when that happens we lose hope.

What we see in Scripture is an emerging picture of Jesus of Nazareth, our ultimate hope.

And this hope gives a perspective from which to view the threats and worries of life. Isaiah's words remind us that those things are never the last word. Our hope is anchored in Jesus, the living art from the stump of Jesse.

Let's take that hope and use it to sustain ourselves when the threats and worries of life rage all around us.

Let us pray:

Great Healer, make us aware of your great Spirit in our world today. Touch and heal our brokenness, and lift us out of despair and doubt. Dry our tears of pain and sorrow. Comfort and nourish us with the many blessings of your great love, O God. May we flourish and blossom in the warmth and compassion of your healing love and grace. Amen.

Shalom

Pastor Jack