

Isaiah 11 sermon Tregear 13.12.20

Christmas is THAT DAY – the now and the not yet

I think most of us live our lives waiting for special days; anticipating days when something special is going to happen. A longing maybe, or a hope that something special is going to happen.

We live in the expectation of a day – when will it come? – kids before Christmas; waiting for the day to travel – on cruises, on an overseas flight (not too much of that this year); waiting for holidays; the end of term;

Today is the third in our signpost series – signposts in the Old Testament that point to Jesus coming – today's, it's about a specific time , a day was coming – didn't say when exactly, but it did say what would happen; and gave a description of the person who would come on that day. I wonder, as you heard Alex read the passage, whether you heard some of the prophecies repeated that we've been talking about the last 2 weeks.

Let's get straight into it. The context of chap.11 is God has been telling the people of Judah that the Assyrians will come and they will destroy but God will cut them down – they too will be destroyed. They might seem like tall trees, mighty and powerful, but God will cut them down. And so we get the same imagery of a tree in v.1 of chapter 11. Israel's tree has been cut down; it seems like Israel is destroyed; it's no more.

Read v.1 – There's just a stump, – the stump is what is left after the bulk of the tree has been cut down. It seems like nothing can grow from that but it does (eg our cactus – 5 metres tall; cut down; just a stump left; but now it has a number of shoots coming out of it – almost a metre high); a shoot doesn't sound much but it is a sign of life. It will be a new branch bearing fruit – the promise is that someone will come from David's line – and the Old Testament mentions some people who could have been possibilities - Solomon; Hezekiah; Zerubbabel.....lastly Jesus, he does measure up to the picture given to us in chapter 11 – remember back 2 weeks ago when Di told us of the promise in 2 Samuel 7 of a person who would come from David's line.

But what will this person, described as the shoot be like -surely he won't amount to much. But look at the surprising words of v.2 and following:

Read v.2 - The **spirit of the Lord** will bring all these amazing qualities to bear on this one person – v.2 similar to chap. 9:6 that we read last week – spirit of wisdom; counsel; might – (compare with Isaiah 9:6 – Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.)

Read v.3-5 – I love this picture of one who will deal rightly - righteousness and justice. We long for someone like that don't we? Someone who is trustworthy, who won't just help the powerful, or the good-looking, or the educated – he will not judge by appearance, or make a decision based on what he hears, he will find the truth and he will give justice to the poor. In my version in v.4 it says "The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked – he just speaks and it happens – it's what God does at creation, and it's exactly what Jesus does when he healed, calmed the storm, cast out demons – "one breath destroyed the wicked". And we have seen this shoot, this branch from David's line – it's Jesus.

When Jesus began his public ministry in Luke 4 he said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me". He hasn't been elected; he hasn't been nominated for a position, but the Spirit of the Lord rests on him. God's power, presence, wisdom, righteousness is on Jesus.

Then we come to these fascinating verses, v.6-10 – what an amazing picture; we love it – O, that it would come now. What does it all mean?

Let's start with **v.6 and the expression - "In that day"** – it's used 4 more times in the following verses; what does this phrase mean? Isaiah is looking forward to a day when something will happen – it might not be a day literally, could be a period of time. Now obviously we don't see "the wolf and the lamb lying down together, or a lion eating hay or a child being safe next to the hole where the cobra lives." So what is going on? Jesus has come; we know that the shoot, the new branch from David's line has come. And Jesus has begun his reign as king in his kingdom, this world. He has brought peace; he has brought restoration – but it is not complete. Jesus' first coming was at that first Christmas. And Jesus will come again. The Bible says we now today live in this period between Jesus' first and second coming. It's sometimes called the Last Days – we have been brought into God's kingdom if we are followers of Jesus, but we know that there is still so much needing to be changed in our own

lives and in the world. The wolf and the lamb are not lying down together yet. So for us now there is frustration and joy.

Have you ever been in the kitchen when someone is baking delicious food? The cook lets you have a taste before giving you strict instructions not to touch any more until it is served on the table later. The anticipation is almost unbearable. It would have been easier if you had not been allowed that taste. But now that you know how delicious it is, you find it hard to wait for another mouthful. Those two hours before the meal seem like an eternity. It is similar for us in the Christian life. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit; a taste of the blessings of heaven. We know something of what it is like to be holy, and we long for more. And we know something of what it means to know God through Jesus and to be loved by him, and we cannot wait to experience it more. The Apostle Paul says it's like we groan inwardly as we wait for Jesus to return. We are frustrated by the sin that is in our lives and in the world. We long for home with Jesus. We **ARE** citizens of heaven but we must, for the time being, live as "strangers" in the world.

But I was encouraged by this comment the other day - **"Life for those who live WITH God never ends. Union with God starts today and then continues on thru our earthly death to unending union with God. My eternal life has begun now."**

We live our lives in the light of that day when Jesus came but also in the hope of that day when Jesus is coming. So what does that mean for me today, in my everyday life? At work? in my family? Because Jesus came at Christmas to earth, and because he died on the cross I can now trust him in everything that happens in my life. If I have become a member of his family I have nothing to fear, now or in the future. I wonder What are your fears today? When you and I come into God's family we are united with God. This is a union that never ends. Our friends will die, our spouse will die, our parents , even our children will die – but our union with God never ends. It's like this. Life for those who live with God never ends. When I became a follower of Jesus I became united with Jesus. My union with God started that day and now it continues on through my earthly life, it's unending through my earthly death. Death doesn't stop my union with Jesus.

Let's keep reading through this wonderful passage. Follow with me, I'll stop to make a few comments but it's just so encouraging.

READ 11:11 – 12:6

Chapter 12 is a wonderful chapter isn't it? The person here can't help but sing. It was great to sing at church today. Like a release of joy. It is right that we enjoy singing. God has given us this wonderful gift. Singing is a release of emotions and words which capture the wonder of God and make us pause to express that wonder.

I remember when George and I went to Pakistan we were surprised to find that in the mosques there was no singing. Muslims, in fact, were told not to sing. It was banned. You certainly didn't sing to God. How sad, that they can't express their praise and wonder to God in song. We can sing and praise and wonder at our amazing God.

Right now we have seen something of God's glory when Jesus came into the world. That's why Christmas is so significant. It's God breaking into this world, displaying his wisdom; showing the inadequacy of human wisdom. We are filled with wonder, now, at Jesus, at God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. But, then, we will realise just how little we really knew about the wonder of God. And throughout eternity we will continue to discover how wonderful God is and like the person of Isaiah 12 we will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation and we will sing. "In that day". That day is now but it's not yet. That day has come but it is coming in even greater brightness; that day when the wolf will lie down with the lamb.

Wow, Christmas is a lot more than Santa, a big fat jolly man in a red suit saying, "Ho, Ho ,Ho." O that we would have eyes to see Jesus this Christmas and know his life within us.