

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Third Sunday in Advent, December 17, 2017

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 339, 130:1, 55, 10, 343:1-2.

Lessons: 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Acts 13:13-43. Matthew 3:13-17.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 11:1-5.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Have you ever seen a tree that has been cut down grow little shoots or have sprouts of new life come from the dead stump? That's the picture that God is giving us here.

But this isn't just a lesson in the biology of trees. This is a lesson in how the Savior of all mankind would be descended from Abraham and his descendant the great King David, who was the son of Jesse.

Genealogy can be very important. Today we will talk about a very important genealogy. We will talk about a descendant of David and Jesse. Isaiah tells us that

“A SHOOT WILL SPRING UP FROM THE STEM OF JESSE”

- 1. “A branch from his roots will bear fruit”**
- 2. This descendant of Abraham, Jesse, and David shall redeem the world.**

Two weeks ago we looked at the promises God gave to Abram, later called Abraham, that *“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.* Genesis 12:3 (NIV)

Our sermon text is another in the long line of promises and prophecies that lead to Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who shall redeem his people from their sins.

We read in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew that *“Jesse the father of King David”* Matthew 1:6 (NIV) is one of the ancestors of Jesus.

Jesse is the one to whom God sent the prophet Samuel in our Old Testament lesson to identify one of his sons to be the king to replace Saul. That son was David. Jesse himself was the son of Obed and grandson of Ruth. But as you remember from the book of Ruth, they were not a royal family living in luxury. However, this family could trace its lineage back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through Jacob's son Judah.

But the picture here is pointing much further down the lineage, way past the royal glories of King David and King Solomon. It is pointing to a time when a shoot from the stem of Jesse – the twig sprouting from the root-stock coming from Jesse – would be a very special, very important descendant.

You know, of course, that we are talking about Jesus Christ who was born of Mary in Bethlehem. We are talking about someone important who came from what one writer called the dead stock, the stump, of the former proud tree of the house of David.

Scripture here says *“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.”*

God had provided every blessing for his chosen people, the descendants of Abraham. He promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would be theirs. After delivering Abraham's descendants from slavery in Egypt and a humbling journey of 40 years through the wilderness he settled them in this promised land. However, they did not kill all the pagan inhabitants of the land of Canaan as God had demanded, but intermarried with them. That wicked influence from outsiders together with the innate sin in every human, led

them to move farther and farther away from God. They abandoned him, although his promise and his part in his covenant did not disappear.

But the ax of God's judgment would cut down the proud tree of Judah as well as their enemies.

The royal line of David would remain. It had to because God had promised that the Messiah would come from the line of David and rule forever.

God's judgment would reduce the royal line of David to nothing more than a stump – its majesty only a dim memory; its power only a collection of stories of past victory; its fame and glory unknown to all but the readers of Scripture.

Through Isaiah, God promised that he would deliver his people from their enemies. But over the centuries God's people would also be cut down and reduced to virtually nothing. For a time, the victory God would give his people fades into the background, and we see his judgment on sin and rebellion. Remember that the most important enemies of God's people are sin, death, and the power of the devil, and not physical, earthly enemies.

But there was a difference among the family trees of the descendants of Abraham. Some would be decimated, but not this one. Isaiah tells us about it here. All the other stumps would remain dead and lifeless, but not this one. A shoot would come from the stump of Jesse. The house of David would be reduced to its humble beginnings in Bethlehem. Isaiah emphasized that this was the stump of Jesse, David's father, a private citizen whose son David tended his sheep before his calling and anointing to become king of Israel to succeed Saul. Help and hope would come from an unexpected source.

By the time that Jesus was born, there was nothing but a stump of a tree that had been cut off. That was all that was left of the former grandeur of David's house

This would be a shoot, a fresh twig that would become great, powerful, and grand.

The renewal of this family would be a miracle, since the immediate ancestors of Jesus, the Savior, would be a poor virgin maid and a carpenter, a far cry from royalty.

But this child would be a grand child, a great person, in fact, one who turned out to be a sinless person.

The small green branch would shoot up and grow because God had given his promise. This appearance of this sprout, or branch, is a miracle of God's grace and power. He would be born in Bethlehem, the hometown of Jesse and David.

Isaiah promises that ***“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -- and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.”*** Most translations plainly recognize this “Spirit” with a capital letter S, meaning the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God.

“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him.” This is the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, himself God from eternity, resting on this descendant of a poor family. The Holy Spirit will land and settle upon him with the fullness of his divine power. This special blessing upon this child is also described in Psalm 45: ***“You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”*** Psalm 45:7 (NIV) God has anointed him, appointed him, and given him tremendous power and blessings.

God, his heavenly Father, will give him ***“the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding.”*** Wisdom is the ability to look into the very essence of things. Understanding is the ability to distinguish and perceive differences. This is complete wisdom, and the ability to make the proper distinction concerning all things. This is a wisdom which searches all things, even the secrets of God. These give him insight into all things that his people will need to know and understand, including the depths of God's nature and his grace. Christ can give us all wisdom. ***“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”*** Proverbs 9:10 (KJV)

Scripture calls the Holy Ghost “the counselor”. But that is also one of the names given to Jesus, as you heard last Sunday.

Jesus is also to be given ***“the Spirit of counsel and of power.”*** He not only knows the right and proper counsel or advice in every difficulty of body and soul, but he also carries out his plans for the benefit of men. He is a counselor. He does not need to surround himself with advisors as every human ruler does. He already

knows all things. His counsel, or advice, is the grace of God, the plan by which God would rescue all the world from sin, death, and the devil. And that plan is recorded for all mankind in his Word, the Bible. By the counsel of his Word, the Messiah has guided believers since the message of the Word of God was first given to mankind.

Because he has *“the Spirit of knowledge”* he knows all the mysteries of God.

And because he has *“the fear of the LORD”* he gives God all the glory, respect, and honor which is due him. This, of course, is something which we cannot do because of our sinfulness.

Fear of the Lord is a reverent respect for the Lord that submits to his will. Jesus completely submitted to the will of his Father.

Isaiah tells us that this one to be born of the genealogy of Jesse *“will delight in the fear of the LORD.”* We sinners cannot, by nature, even give God the fear, that is, the respect, honor and glory that he deserves. Oh, yes, it is through our New Man that we can begin to fear God in the way that we learn from Luther’s explanation of the commandments. But for perfect obedience, for perfect fear of the Lord, someone else had to accomplish this on the part of sinful mankind. That someone is Jesus Christ.

And this descendant of David will delight, will rejoice in giving God all glory and obedience.

He does this not only because he wants to please his heavenly Father and do his will, but also because this was necessary to redeem mankind from sin. Man had sinned and without redemption was destined to die eternally. Man had to obey God perfectly. God had told mankind that all mankind had to *“Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.”* Leviticus 19:2 (NIV) But sinful man could not do this. It required a sinless man – who came in the person of the sinless Jesus Christ – to accomplish this.

But listen to the beautiful comforting words that follow: *“He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.”*

Men judge by what they see and hear. God – this Son of God and son of Jesse – will judge with righteousness. He knows the hearts of all and will judge repentant sinners as the justifying judge he is. This is not just a spreading around of earthly, material wealth, but giving poor sinners what they need: forgiveness for all their sins.

Oh, yes, on judgment day he will destroy all that mankind holds so dear on this earth. With his word of judgment on the last day *“he will slay the wicked”* and send them to eternal damnation for rejecting him and refusing to believe in him.

But for all who believe in him as their only Savior from their sins, they will see the righteousness and faithfulness he wears and executes. He wears two belts: righteousness and faithfulness. He is just and holy before God and has come to make all the world righteous and just before God. We can rely on his faithfulness. He does not change his mind or course. He judges justly.

All of this surely is a comfort to all poor, repentant, sinners in need of God’s forgiveness and love. He will forgive and love. But he will also destroy the wicked. He is faithful and just. He will condemn the wicked unbelievers on the last day as surely as he will love and care for his precious people.

Remember this is the holy, sinless Son of God, not only a son or descendant of David and his father Jesse. This is a human, yes, but this is also true God. He came to redeem you from your sins. Believe this, repent, and eternal life is yours! Amen.