

Christmas is only a week away. Are you ready? I'm not asking if your shopping and wrapping are done. I'm wondering if your heart is ready; if you're fully engaged and ready to celebrate. I know that there are tons of distractions and that it can be hard to get there. Sometimes you can't really appreciate and celebrate the hope of Christmas until you really grasp the huge problems that Christmas actually addresses. Think about what's happening in our world...

1. Terrorism. Religious fanatics targeting and killing innocent people who are in the wrong place at the wrong time.
2. Sex trafficking
3. Cybercrimes & Cryptocurrency scams
4. Exploitation of refugees fleeing war or famine
5. Abusive regimes in foreign lands
6. Drug cartels functioning above any government or law.
7. Elder abuse
8. Kids bouncing from one foster home to the next having been abused in their own homes.
9. Racism and prejudice
10. Media manipulation and deception

How certain are you that these things will ever be made right? What's the fix? How will these wrongs ever be corrected? In the face of all the unspeakable pain and injustices in our world, what keeps you from slipping into a dark hole of despair? Is there any hope for the injustices that plague our world? Sure, church and government agencies have to do all they can to stand against these kinds of evils. But do you really believe that, given enough time, politicians and believers are going to be able to fix this?

Welcome to Foothills Church...Merry Christmas! Doug was worried about bringing you down last week. You need to know, I'm not in a "Grinchy" mood or trying to be negative. I'm not telling you anything that you don't already know. And, the truth is, the Bible tells us clearly that life is often ugly, painful and unfair. It talks about the suffering in our lives and the pain we endure because of the brokenness that comes from sin; sin against others and sin against us. Romans 8:22-24 says, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved..." -Romans 8:22-24

All of creation groans, not just humanity, and the ultimate Hope of the world is the One who came at Christmas. This is what we have been talking about for the last few weeks. *The only hope we have of ever seeing the injustices in our world perfectly punished and completely resolved is through the rule and reign of Jesus, our Christmas Hope.*

Here's why I say that: The sin that was introduced into the human experience in Genesis 3 is the root cause of the magnified injustices in our world today. It's the source of all the pain and suffering that we've endured, heard about others living through and has led to the deaths of countless others. Our only hope of seeing it adequately dealt with and sufficiently remedied is through the promise God whispers in Genesis 3. The 'seed' of the woman will crush the head of Satan. The Bible clearly teaches us that the promised offspring of the woman is Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, our hope born at Christmas.

When Jesus came, His rule and reign began in the hearts of those who trusted and followed Him; those who yielded to His leadership in their lives. Last week's text in Isaiah was clear that when you *place your hope in Him and let Him lead your life*, when you let Him shine His holy light into your life, He will begin to reverse the effects of the darkness of sin. As you follow His rule and reign in your life, He will empower you to break free

from destructive ways of thinking, behaving and relating. As *you* are changed and *you* reflect His light to the world around you, others are encouraged to let Him lead their lives and they're changed, too. That's why Foothills Church exists: to connect people to Jesus and help the grow to love and serve Him.

But the prince of evil is a slippery, manipulative enemy whose lies keep people in the dark and far from Jesus. Many will refuse to allow the light of God to shine in their lives. And sin, with all the pain and trauma it produces, will continue to war against our souls. Where will it end? When will it stop? Who can properly punish and perfectly resolve everything that's wrong in our world?

Isaiah answers these questions as he describes how the hope of the world will be found in the decisive rule and reign of the One who came at Christmas.

Background

The language of Old Testament prophecy can be tricky sometimes, so I want to describe the context of Isaiah's proclamation. Chapter 11 falls in the middle of a speech that Isaiah is making where he is speaking about the national powers of the day using a metaphor involving forests and trees. Isaiah announces to God's people that because of their disobedience and rebellion, God is going to use Assyria, the super-power to, like a tree, **cut** Israel down to size. That's what Doug mentioned last week. But it would only be a kind of educational or severe disciplinary pruning, not a death blow. Isaiah assures Israel that, after using Assyria to revive and realign their devotion, God would cut-down Assyria for good and once again restore the lives of His people. Using the tree and forest imagery, Isaiah proclaims that ***this ultimate restoration would be accomplished through the final rule of an unprecedented leader who would start as a tender, fragile shoot.*** Look at Isaiah 11:1.

[READ]

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."

Christmas Hope will come from the family line of David (v 1)

That's the first thing Isaiah wants us to know. This unparalleled leader will come from David's family. Turn to Matthew 1:1-16. Matthew wants to make sure we connect the dots on this and understand that Jesus, born at Christmas, though starting out a fragile, tender shoot from David's family line, is our promised Hope. I won't read it all, but I want you to see it... Notice the emphasis Matthew places on Jesse and his son David and through them to Joseph and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

This is the genealogy of *Jesus the Messiah the son of David*, the son of Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ **Salmon the father of Boaz**, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, *Obed the father of Jesse*,

⁶ *and Jesse the father of King David*. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa,

⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah,

¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor,

¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud,

¹⁵ **Elihud the father of Eleazar**, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob,

¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

Matthew wanted the reader to know that Jesus, without a doubt, is from David's family line...Just like Messiah is supposed to be! Now, this tender shoot is going to become an extraordinary, godly leader. Flip back to Isaiah 11 and look at verse 2-3a. [READ]

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—

the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

the Spirit of counsel and of might,

the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—

and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

The promised Hope of Christmas will be full of godly character (v 2-3a)

The next thing we learn about this leader is that the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him in an unprecedented way. This isn't describing a temporary anointing or momentary filling to complete an assignment from God. This is a statement of unique godly character. The Hebrew language highlights this uniqueness through repetition and unpacking the fullness of the Spirit that rests on Him: *the Spirit* of wisdom and understanding...*the Spirit* of counsel and might...*the Spirit* of knowledge and fear of the Lord. This leader is going to overflow with godly character and possess...

- *Unprecedented wisdom and understanding*. He will have the capacity to perfectly discern and judge all things. And He'll have the ability to perceive and see directly to the heart of the matter. There's no pride or ego in Him.

- *Unprecedented counsel and might.* He'll be able to design the correct plan and course of action and have the power to see it all the way through.
- *Unprecedented knowledge and fear of the Lord.* This knowledge is beyond knowing *about* someone - this knowledge describes a deep, personal, intimate relationship and a reverence, respect & honor for God the Father.

With the Spirit of God resting on Him in this unique way, this leader will be like no other leader before Him. Notice what John says about Jesus at his Baptism, [READ] "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and **remain** on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and **remain** is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." (or Son of God.)— John 1:32-33

Later, Paul says this about Jesus, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."—Colossians 1:19-20

I hope you're hearing the message of hope regarding the wrongs in our world. This hope is anchored in His ultimate dominion, the reversal of the effects of sin and its impact in your life and in our world. He's going to reconcile everything to Himself...on earth and in heaven!

To be clear, His rule and reign has started in the lives of those who trust and follow Him right now. In their hearts and lives He's already begun the work of restoration and reconciliation. *But Isaiah wants us to know that there will come a day when His rule & reign will be final and complete. And He will decisively remedy every last injustice and sinful side-effect in our world.* He will right every wrong and He will lead with righteousness and faithfulness.

Check out verses 3b-5. [READ]

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

⁴ 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.

⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

His godly leadership will decisively confront every last injustice (v 3b-5)

When Jesus, our Christmas Hope, ushers in His complete dominion and exercises His full, life-restoring authority, corruption and injustice will be a thing of the past! He will lead with absolute righteousness and uncompromising faithfulness. He won't judge by what he sees, or decide by what he hears; He will go beyond the external to the heart of the matter. With righteousness He will defend the cause of the needy. He will be upright, fair and straight forward in all His decisions. He will be unbiased, thoroughly even-handed and administer a perfect balance of judgment. For the first time in our lives, we won't have to complain, 'That's not fair!' Because, at long last, everything will be fair and in perfect alignment with His flawless, unswerving righteousness.

When Jesus comes in His fullness to rule and reign, He will wear righteousness like a belt. Basically, that means He will be poised and ready for action. When a man prepared for vigorous activity, He tied up his loose, flowing garments with a belt. It's like saying He "rolled up his sleeves and really got to work." Jesus is going to get it done no matter what it takes and He's going to do it perfectly.

[Illustration] I know we have been thinking about the major, worldwide injustices that He'll confront, but think about all the little injustices in our lives that His rule will address.

- In that day, when someone runs into you and totals your car, you'll actually get enough money from insurance to replace it.
- You'll never get falsely accused of talking in class. That's the plight of every student: Someone talks to you, you 'shush' them, and the teacher yells at you!
- You'll never get a ticket when you really weren't speeding.
- You'll never be blamed when someone *else's* phone goes off in the middle of a church service.
- You'll know which of your children *really* broke the lamp.
- And you'll know which of the family members put an empty milk carton back in the fridge.

Imagine what the world will be like under the complete and perfect authority of Jesus. Isaiah gives us glimpse. Look at verses 6-9. [READ]

The wolf will live with the lamb,

the leopard will lie down with the goat,

the calf and the lion and the yearling together;

and a little child will lead them.

⁷The cow will feed with the bear,

their young will lie down together,

and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

⁸The infant will play near the cobra's den,

and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.

⁹They will neither harm nor destroy

on all my holy mountain,

for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD

as the waters cover the sea.

His godly leadership will result in the complete restoration of creation (v 6-9).

These verses paint an amazing picture of life under Christ's rule and reign. Christmas is a HUGE! The celebration of the birth of the tender shoot from the root of Jesse is a colossal deal. Think about the hope this is for us. Under his ultimate rule, old hostilities are reconciled and

released. Predator and prey live together in complete harmony. The natures of things are remarkably transformed - even carnivores become herbivores. Literally, no one who has been conformed to His holiness will act wrongfully or corruptly in this world. That's hard to imagine, isn't it?

On that day, our hope in Jesus will be fully realized, and His authority will be fully revealed. Notice verse 8 and the reference to the reverse of the curse in Genesis 3:15. *"The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest."* The serpent will no longer be a threat. Sin will be decisively addressed, and its side effects completely undone. Jesus is our only hope that all the wrongs in our world will be made right.

Now, you may be wondering when the stuff Isaiah is talking about will actually happen. 'How long am I going to have to wait to see the enemy finally get what he deserves, and ultimate justice is served?' That's fair. So, here's a high-level overview of what the Bible teaches on this.

The Bible says the last days of life as we know it will involve a period of 7 years of tribulation where the experience of life here on earth will get very difficult. They will be filled with increased trials and troubles as satan has some increased freedom to have his way among people. This 7-year period of tribulation will be followed by a literal 1000-year rule and reign of Christ on earth where satan will be bound and held captive in a place the Bible calls the Abyss where he can have no influence on humankind (Revelation 20:1-6). Following the 1000 year, or millennial, reign of Christ on earth, satan will be released, and he'll try and deceive as many as he can before he is defeated once and for all (Revelation 20:7-10). After his defeat the great white throne judgment occurs ushering in the eternal state with a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 20:11-15).

Now, there is some debate as to whether the scene Isaiah describes is the 1000-year reign of Jesus on earth or whether this is referring to the eternal state of the new heaven and new earth. Personally, I think this prophecy as describing the millennial reign of Christ on earth. But

whether it is describing His millennial reign or His heavenly reign, makes no difference. Ultimately, Isaiah is describing a future reign of Christ where Jesus has done exactly what He came to do. Isaiah was looking forward to the One who would be born at Christmas and would ultimately accomplish all this. We look back at Christmas and anticipate when all this will be accomplished. He will absolutely crush the head and influence of Satan and restore all of creation from his deadly influence.

Texts like these reveal the *hope* that we have because of Christmas. They encourage the people of God with a deep assurance because the Messiah, Jesus, is God's perfect leader sent to make everything right again. Isaiah is painting a picture of God's restoration plan—where the curse of sin has been removed from the world and the original, blessed state of Eden has been restored.

Conclusion

Think about all the wrongs this will confront. On that day, when Jesus exercises His full and complete authority, there will be no more self-centered, self-serving, selfish acts. There will absolutely be no more stupid hunger in the world. Corrupt governments will no longer siphon off resources so they can live luxuriously while millions die of starvation and disease.

There will be no more human trafficking. No more prostitution. No more child abuse. No more drug lords. No more pandemics. On that day there will be no more death and no more taxes. No child will ever experience abuse from a sexual predator. No race of people will ever be mistreated. No vulnerable person will ever be taken advantage of. On that day no one will need to suffer through chemo and hearts won't be torn by divorce. On that day there will be no more sons and daughters sent off to war.

Jesus the Son of God, Messiah, the One who came at Christmas, is our only hope for the injustices that plague us. Christ, our Hope, will ultimately restore a peaceful rest to all of creation and rule over it with

unparalleled godly leadership. His rule and reign will decisively confront every injustice and perfectly restore what sin has ravaged.

The damage that the Fall caused in the beginning, our Source of Christmas Hope will reverse in the end. The Fall messed up what God wanted for His creation and the One in whom we've placed our hope will reestablish it. The Fall pushed humans away from God; Jesus will bring them close again. The Fall disrupted God's image in human life; the One who came at Christmas will make it perfect once more. The Fall gave satan his greatest victory; Christ will hand him his greatest defeat.

Christmas is a big deal. It's because of Christmas that we have hope...and not just hope floating 'out there' somewhere. My hope, your hope, is in the person, the power, the presence, the purpose of Jesus—the One who came at Christmas, the tender shoot from the stump of Jesse. Celebrate His birth with all your heart, soul, mind and strength friends. May it bubble-over in you because He alone is your Hope.