

Jesus is Worth Celebrating Series

Full of Counsel and Strength (Isa. 11:2)

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Full of Counsel and Strength

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Have you ever needed advice?

1. Sometimes we must make difficult decisions. Have you faced a situation when you didn't know what to do, how to handle it, or what to say to someone else? Have you ever sought out someone else's advice? I know I have—many times. You may have been confused about what the right or wise path to take was. Or maybe there were factors involved in the situation that you didn't know how they were going to play out so you couldn't decide due to your own human limitations. Perhaps you simply lacked adequate knowledge in a certain area to be able to make a good decision.
2. In these types of situations, those who believe in God generally turn to Him in prayer, asking for His help in making good decisions. Isaiah presents the promised ruler of chapter 11 as the person to whom the nations of the world go for advice. Asking for help in personal decision-making is on one level; asking for help in decisions that affect an entire nation and the world is on a completely different level. Yet, Isaiah says that God's ruler will have the resources to deal with any level of decision making.

B. As disciples, the more confidence we have in Jesus, the more we will try to acquire His advice through deepening our knowledge of the Bible. It is through the transformation of our thinking that we will know the will of God (Rm. 12:2). Gaining the wisdom of God helps us navigate the difficult situations and decisions of life.

C. It is possible for people not to value Jesus and the wisdom of God. These people think God is irrelevant, and possibly even completely uninvolved, in their lives and the events of the world. When people think this way, they don't care what God has to say. They don't think Jesus offers them anything helpful for the way they are living their life. They will rely instead on their own wisdom and other sources of information about the world—typically science and “experts”. The attitude with which individuals approach the Bible is determined by their view of God. Those who have a low view of God will be dismissive of the advice of the Bible. Those with a high view of God will seek out the wisdom and advice contained in God's Word.

D. Isaiah encourages us to value the life advice of Jesus by presenting the future ruler of both God's people and the nations of the world (the Messiah) as being so smart that He can do what no other human ruler has been able to do: bring about true world peace. God's ruler will lead the entire world with His wisdom. He will usher in the best society humanity has ever experienced. The result will be a world full of peace (Isa. 9:7).

II. The Impact of Jesus' Leadership

A. For world peace to become a reality in our world, certain steps need to be taken. Some of these steps are very difficult—so difficult that no human leader up to this point in human history has been able to do it. Even the most powerful rulers throughout human history have not been able to bring in true world peace so that everyone willingly submits to their authority. At best, the most powerful rulers have imposed their authority on those who disagree with them by force of power. Only a specific type of leader will be able to do what is necessary to bring about

God’s utopian world where all nations willingly submit themselves to the authority of a single world ruler.

- B. One effect of the Messiah’s leadership of government is that “The nations will resort to the root of Jesse” (Isa. 11:10). This predicted leader, called the root of Jesse, will be treated a certain way by “the nations”. This isn’t just one nation, Israel, but the nations of the world—plural. What are the nations doing? They “resort” to God’s leader. The term means to address a question to someone and expect and answer from them.¹ In short, the nations of the world are coming to God’s ruler for advice. The probable reason for this behavior, similar to the wisdom of King Solomon, is that everyone recognizes the superior wisdom of this person. They know God’s leader has more credibility than anyone else. They are actively seeking out His opinion. The nations know the Messiah understands how to run the world so that positive results are achieved.
- C. An interesting second effect of the leadership of the Messiah is, “And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked” (Isa. 11:4). Anyone who has been in leadership or worked with the most difficult of society will know how challenging it is to deal with individuals or groups who have bad character and are immoral. These types of people can be “irreconcilable”—impossible to please or appease (2 Tim. 3:3). There are people in this world who can’t get along with anyone due to their poor and selfish character. Governments today still struggle with how to best resolve crime and the societal ills they are facing. No society has a perfect plan for dealing with the bad apples. How are leaders supposed to deal with those with whom it is impossible to work? God’s ruler will be able to handle, according to His own power, the most rebellious of society.
- D. Both incredibly challenging steps of leadership will be navigated well by the Messiah. The positive effects of such leadership activities will influence the entire society. Not all leaders are able take these steps, but God’s special ruler can. We will look at what enables God’s ruler to do what other leaders can’t in the next two sections.

III. The Quality of Counsel

- A. We are going to examine two more qualities of the Messiah that enable Him to create the effects we just looked at. The second pair of related qualities are, as previously mentioned, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Closely connected to the quality of wisdom mentioned in the previous message is, “the spirit of counsel” (v. 2). The reason the nations come to the shoot grown from the stump or roots of Jesse to provide them with answers is because of this quality.
- B. Counsel refers to being provided direction or advice as to a decision or course of action.² God’s ruler has the ability to give good advice not only for individuals, but also for entire nations. This personal quality is further explained in a later discussion of the Messiah:

⁴ The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens *Me* morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. ⁵ The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back. (Isa. 50:4-5)

¹ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Isaiah 11:10 “resort”

² Logos 10 Bible Study Software Bible Word Study Guide for the term “counsel” found in Isaiah 11:2

- C. There are two main aspects of being able to give counsel both of which the Messiah possesses. First is mentioned, “The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.” (v. 4). Advice involves being able to give what the other person needs verbally. To give counsel, the person helping another needs to know how to say the right things. One example of this being mentioned is helping sustain a person who is tired. Giving good counsel requires knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.
- D. Second, a good counselor doesn’t just need to know what to say to meet the need of the individual who has approached them, they also need a second skill, “He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.” (v. 4) and “The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient” (v. 5). While having the ability to listen to the person who is seeking counsel is also good, the ability to listen is not directed to the other person but to God Himself. Jesus listens to the father very faithfully and carried out what He heard. Those who give counsel need to develop the ability to hear with an ear of faith—to respond to God’s Word with trust—and to live obediently to the message they hear from God. This divine message is what passed on to the person receiving the counsel. These two skills, listening and speaking, are foundational to the quality of counsel.³
- E. We progress to ask the question, “Did Jesus have the quality of counsel?” As we observe the life of Jesus, are there examples of Him giving good life advice and helping others make good decisions? While there are many examples to choose from, only one will be presented:
- ¹³ Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me.” ¹⁴ But He said to him, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵ Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” ¹⁶ And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive. ¹⁷ And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.’” ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?’ ²¹ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (Lk. 12:13-21)
- F. When put on the spot in public, Jesus provides an impromptu counseling session in front of a crowd. A person brought a real-life problem to Jesus’ attention, “tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me” (v. 13). It is likely that this person felt like the victim and thought they were being mistreated by their own family. Jesus is not going to provide counsel to someone who is focused on their own life problems—a very common scenario.

³ There is another element of being a good counselor mentioned as well, “I was not disobedient” (v. 5). Hearing what God has to say isn’t enough by itself, a good counselor will also personally live out and obey what God says. They will have the capacity to speak from personal experience. Good counselors don’t just tell other people what to do, they can show them how to do it because they’ve already done it themselves.

- G. Jesus responds by pointing out the man's illegitimate motives, "who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" (v. 14). In other words, Jesus says He has nothing to do with this problem. This man is trying to abuse Jesus' credibility to get what he wants. He is trying to get Jesus on his side. This becomes even more apparent as the man doesn't ask Jesus to make an assessment of his situation, but rather simply makes a demand and tells Jesus what to do.
- H. After pointing out the inappropriateness of the man's behavior, Jesus immediately deals with what is going on behind the scenes by dealing with the man's heart and motives, "be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." (v. 15). Jesus speaks directly to the spiritual danger that is causing problems in this man's life: greed. Jesus even knows about greed itself to know that it can come in various forms. Jesus doesn't just tell the man what is wrong in his life, He tells the person from the crowd how to fix it. Happiness and quality of life do not depend on how much wealth or possessions a person has. The true source of life is found elsewhere. A person can be unhappy with lots of money, and a person who is poor can experience a rich and satisfying life. Jesus understands how life works and is trying to help this man understand life.
- I. The final piece of counsel Jesus provides according to this man's need is to help him change the way he views his situation. To support the claim Jesus just made about the quality of life not being dependent on financial wealth, He goes on to tell a true to life story that explains the principle He just stated ("He told them a parable...The land of a rich man was very productive." v. 16). Through the story Jesus explains the real worth of wealth considering eternity to help the man have a more accurate perspective on his life regarding his desire for wealth.
- J. While this is just one example, we have learned enough about Jesus to recognize He fulfills the requirement of "the spirit of counsel". Jesus brilliantly provides wise and informed life advice, on the spot without any chance of preparation to a person who is only concerned about their own issues. Jesus addressed the problem on multiple levels and gave the man exactly what he needed to deal with the situation he was facing. Jesus is a "Wonderful Counselor" (Isa. 9:6).
- K. Are you convinced your life would be better off if you put Jesus' teachings and moral principles into practice in your life? Does your interaction with Jesus' words reflect this? Any Christian will tell you the teachings and message of Jesus are important. This is not the critical factor. What's important is whether the person acts like they are important. Disciples will value what Jesus has to say enough that it causes them to energetically seek out and learn from the words of Jesus. They will spend time reading and studying the words of Jesus. Effort will be put into understanding them. Disciples will also figure out relevant ways to use the words of Jesus in their daily lives. They will put Jesus's words into action—His words will make a difference in how they live. What Jesus has to say is relevant to them.
- L. The message of Jesus changes the convictions, character, and conduct of those who believe in Him. Jesus transforms people on multiple levels. Individuals who believe in Jesus trust that He knows best how life is to be lived, and they are convinced the highest quality of life can be found when they obey Jesus' words—even if they don't understand why Jesus says what He does. When Jesus says an action is wrong, a disciple will be persuaded that what Jesus is protecting them from is indeed harmful. When Jesus says a value is important, a disciple will be

convinced Jesus' priorities are correct. Disciples approach Jesus and His message with a humble attitude and a learning posture.

IV. The Quality of Strength

- A. The second quality mentioned that will be possessed by the future predicted ruler of God is strength (v. 2). When we think of people who need counsel, we typically picture them going through a very difficult season of life. Not only do people in these types of situations need wisdom to help them navigate their circumstances, but they also need strength to carry on when life is challenging or painful. It is not surprising to find strength mentioned as the companion quality of counsel.
- B. The term strength communicates the property of being physically or mentally strong.⁴ While Jesus possesses both qualities, it may be the case that the mental strength element is primarily in view. Once again, fascinating details are added in a later description of the Messiah:

⁶ I gave My back to those who strike *Me*, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. ⁷ For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. ⁸ He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. (Isa. 50:6-8)
- C. Several instances of strength are mentioned here. Verse 6 says, "I gave My back to those who strike Me." A willingness to let other people hurt you—even physically—when it is in your power to stop it demonstrates an incredible amount of strength that many people do not have. Similarly, freely accepting "humiliation" (v. 6) also requires the same type of strength. While not physical, emotional and psychological strength is needed to unjustly be mocked and have one's reputation stained by falsehoods.
- D. Notice where the Messiah's help comes from: "the Lord GOD helps Me" (v. 7). The reason God's ruler has the strength to face these mistreatments with strength is due to a mindset that finds security in God's opinion rather than man's: "Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed" (v. 7). These difficulties can be endured well because the highest priority of the Messiah is being faithful to God rather than finding good treatment from others in this world.
- E. Further, despite all the difficulties, strength is seen in the unshakable confidence God's ruler has in knowing that He is doing what is right from God's perspective. "Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me." (v. 8). The Messiah does not back down from His opponents because He knows truth, what is right, and God Himself is on His side. He welcomes the opposite and invites them to go toe to toe with Him without hesitation or a hint of backing down. That's genuine strength! That's the manliest man—the alpha male as our culture labels it.
- F. While this list of demonstrations of strength is short, it is impressive all the same. We know, according to the life of Jesus, that Jesus displayed this kind of strength in the most challenging

⁴ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Bible Word Study Guide for the term "strength" found in Isaiah 11:2

time of His life: when He knew the time of His torturous and excruciating death was approaching. In other words, Jesus expressed this kind of strength when He was at His worst—His most difficult season of life. This knowledge further amazes us at the depth of His strength.

G. One example will help us see that Jesus does have the quality of strength:

³¹ Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.” ³² And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.’ ³³ Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.” (Lk. 13:31-33)

H. Jesus comes face to face with a death threat from someone in a significant position of power (“Herod wants to kill You” (v. 31), yet He doesn’t even blink. He isn’t intimidated in the least (“Go and tell that fox...” v. 32). He confidently asserts that He will do what He set out to do and the threat will not affect Him (“I reach My goal” v. 32). Imagine what your response would be to someone who has legal authority to have you killed, someone with access to military power who threatens your life, and someone who also has very poor character making murder a real possibility. How would you respond? Do you see the strength of Jesus in what He says?

I. Jesus dealt with all the pressures of life as we do, but He was able to handle them all with a type of strength we admire. Jesus never ran out of resources with which to live well amid the pressures of life. Even in the most difficult of circumstances we observe Jesus standing strong. Jesus lived His life with a mental strength that most of us want, but don’t always have when we need it. Jesus never gave up, lost hope, got discouraged, or succumb to despair. Even when life was most challenging and stressful, Jesus never wavered in His commitment of being faithful to God the Father by letting go of His own will so God’s will could be done.

J. When we begin to realize just how strong Jesus is, we can’t help but acknowledge that He is far superior to us. He does what we can’t. Jesus, as the Messiah, has strength that no one else has on their own, which is why He can live a kind of life that we failed to live. This is why we need Him and how He inspires us. Disciples rely on Jesus to help them develop the strength they need to live the life God wants them to live.

V. Conclusion

A. Isaiah predicted that God’s ruler will not only have the Spirit empowered qualities of understanding and wisdom, but also of counsel and strength. He even gives us specific examples of what these qualities will look like in the life of the Messiah.

B. Both counsel and strength are powerfully demonstrated in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. This adds credibility to Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah talked about in the Bible. The evidential case for the identity of Jesus is getting stronger the more detailed the description of the Messiah becomes. Jesus has the personal and leadership qualities needed to be the ruler of the world just as Isaiah predicted.

VI. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Has there ever been a time in your life when Jesus' counsel from the Bible has made a beneficial impact on your life? If so, when?
- B. Read Jn. 6:28-29 and Lk. 23:20-31, how does Jesus embody the qualities of counsel and strength?
- C. How might a person discover Jesus' advice for dealing with a difficult coworker?
- D. What can a disciple do, to grow in the strength given to them by the Spirit (Lk. 21:36, Isa. 40:30-31, Ps. 18:1-2, Josh. 14:11, 1 Chr. 16:11, Neh. 8:10)?
- E. How might you encourage someone else to accept the counsel of Jesus?