

# Facing an Uncertain Future with Hope and Purpose

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*New Year*

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"The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him. By His stripes we are healed." We read today from Isaiah 60, "Arise shine for your light has come." All of these passages picturing the glory of Christ are the reason that many people in church history have called Isaiah the fifth gospel. You've got Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Isaiah. The glory with which he saw the Savior 700 years before the birth of the Savior is astounding, and one of the things that I think we can draw great encouragement from is Isaiah had this incredible vision to see Christ with such clarity in part because of the circumstances in which he lived. Now God gave him the grace obviously to see, but it was because of the darkness of the times in which he lived that he had the ability to see the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ with such clarity, and this is the reason that I've really been encouraged myself as I've been working through these messages these last few weeks is because Isaiah is uniquely relevant to Christians in America today. Remember his life circumstance. He starts ministering in 740 BC, around 740 BC, when at the death of Uzziah. Uzziah had reigned for more than 50 years in Judah, and it had been a time of really unprecedented prosperity. I mean, other than Solomon and David's great reign, after that, it was unprecedented, the prosperity of Uzziah's reign, the well-being, the stability. With Uzziah's death, things change. Jotham, his son, Ahaz, his grandson began to reign very quickly. Jotham only reigns five years, then Ahaz reigns, and then you're going to have Hezekiah. And so Isaiah ministers now, after a time of great prosperity and stability, when now things are becoming very uncertain, very dangerous for the nation of Judah, the southern kingdom. Jerusalem is now under the threat of an invasion by the Assyrian world power and immediately the threat of invasion from Israel and the Arameans. So you have all of these various pressures that are coming. They were living in a very uncertain future, with a very uncertain future, and Isaiah, because of what he was able to see, was able to give hope and purpose.

I mentioned how Isaiah's name means "salvation is of Yahweh," and I shared with you on previous weeks that Isaiah begins his message by saying, remember the prophet normally says, "This is what the word of the Lord I have received." He declares what he has heard. But Isaiah says, In Isaiah 1:1, "The vision, the vision which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, king of Judah." He had a 60-year ministry, and what he's sharing is what he saw. Now, he received the word of God. Yes, he did. But he's saying the vision is what he saw. God gave him a clarity to see things as they truly are. And I think what you see about Isaiah is he was able to see really

in two ways with extraordinary clarity. He saw the present in the present reality that they were living in, the present circumstances in which he lived, he was able to see with incredible clarity the spiritual forces behind the things that were happening in history. You see the physical realities, he saw beyond that the spiritual powers at work and ultimately he saw the Lord, God at work. So he was able to see in the present beyond the physical to the spiritual, and then the second way he was able to see is he was able to see into the future with incredible precision, stunning accuracy. I mean, we know God gives all the prophets perfect accuracy, but of all the prophets and all the prophecies Isaiah sees with the most stunning detail.

So he sees, he sees God at work in the present, God's hand at work in the present, all the chaos around him, he sees God's hand. Really the defining moment for Isaiah is Isaiah 6:1, remember when he was called. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." He saw God with his eyes, the train of his robe filling the temple, Isaiah 6:1 to 5. He saw God at work in the present, but he also saw God's purpose and God's glory that was coming in the future with incredible precision and what we need, because we live in circumstances which are, as I said, very much like Isaiah's day. Strictly speaking, every day is uncertain. The future is always uncertain but it just seems a lot more appropriate to put that adjective before the future today than it has in any time in my life. We live in an uncertain future, an uncertain time. We see the darkness descending on Americans so many ways: spiritual apostasy, cultural turmoil and confusion, social unrest, economic decline and pressures, and we see the threat of war and the reality of war, the threat of a world war with what's going on in Ukraine or the Middle East. And so as we look to 2024, there's a lot of reasons for concern that are legitimate and yet, how can we face an uncertain future with hope and purpose? We need to see what Isaiah saw. We need to see, and we're going to see it as we look at the glorious passage we're going to look at this morning, to see the reality of God's hand in the present and the reality of what God is going to do in the future, which is going to have, actually, the reality of what he's going to do in the future in our day, because we stand on this side of Calvary, and on this side of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we can begin to experience that future reality today and that gives us hope and purpose.

So "Facing an Uncertain Future with Hope and Purpose." Let's read Isaiah 11:1 to 10. Here again, look at the vision that he sees 700 years before the birth of Christ. Isaiah 11:1, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse..." Well, let me read verse 33 and 34 of the previous chapter, because what I want you to see is the image that dominates this passage and particularly our passage we're reading today, but even the previous chapters, is an image of a failed tree and an image of a deforestation, an area that had lots of trees, imagine now, deforested, shot down, devastated, and they're stumps, and in particular, he sees one stump and the glory that comes from that one stump. So I'm going to read verse 33 and 34 of chapter 10, because you begin to see some of the action of God, the wrath of God, it basically levels the forest and in the wake of that leveling of the forest of God's wrath, his salvation is made known. Verse 33 of chapter 10,

33 Behold, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash [that is the huge branches]; Those also who are tall in stature

will be cut down And those who are lofty will be abased. 34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

God's wrath, leveling Lebanon, the cedars of Lebanon, the great trees, all leveled. Now, in that context, here are these words.

1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; 4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. 10 Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

Let's pray together.

*Father, as we come again to Your word, we come as people who are in great need. Lord, we know that we don't even realize how needy we are, but You know. You know our hearts. You know our anxious thoughts before we think them. You know our fears, our worries. You know our sins. We come asking that Your word might search our hearts, expose where we need to repent, and cause us to look on the greatness of Your Son, that we might trust Him more, that we might glory in Him and Him alone, and that we might see His glory made known in our lives. Lord, our desire is that the earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.*

Facing an uncertain future with hope and purpose. To face an uncertain future with hope and purpose, we need to see what Isaiah saw and what we're going to see is when we look at this passage in context, we're going to have to spend a minute kind of working the context, the first point of the outline, actually going to be looking at the previous context from where we stopped last week in chapter 9 and verse 7, we're going to look at the context flowing from there to help us understand how we need to see what Isaiah saw. I

mentioned that his circumstances are like ours, but what he's seeing is, and this is what Isaiah understood, he was seeing, like we are, moral decay, spiritual apostasy, cultural decline, social unrest. He was seeing national insecurity, the reality of the threat of war, economic hardship growing. He would see these things and they would increase throughout his ministry. There would be some ebb and flow of that but particularly in his early ministry, he saw the onslaught of these things, and as he sees these things, he sees that what he needs to focus on more than anything else is not the reality of the evil that is growing, but the hand of God. In fact, the first point is Isaiah, like Isaiah, we need to see God's hand in judgment. We need to see God's hand in judgment, that's the first point. We need to see God's hand in judgment and worship him. I mentioned the image is a felled tree. The dominant image throughout the passage, as we saw last week, an image that he used was the flood, the waters flooding in and the devastation that comes from a flood, and then he turns to focus on the idea of a forested area and Israel, back in Bible times, was incredibly a forested area. The cypress tree and the juniper and all these trees were much more prominent and common than they are now. Deforestation happened through various kingdoms that, Rome, and then later, as the Turks and everything came into Israel, it was more and more deforesting of that area. But they knew what it was like to have trees. We live in a forested area. I was talking to a young man who, my nephew actually, who lives in California now, and he was saying as he was back for Christmas, it's really cool to realize we live in a forest. When you live in Southern California, you see that, hey, actually, Georgia, it's a forested area. If we don't kill the tree, knock the tree down, it's going to grow. I mean, if we don't do anything, trees will be all around us in 30 years; they would just grow up everywhere, pine trees and then oak trees. We live in a forest. Well, Isaiah uses this image, and I want you to see this. If you go back, and what we're going to see is, he shows this image of God deforesting, the land being deforested, but it's really God's work in deforesting it, knocking down all the trees. And we need to, even though it's hard to watch, and there's a sense in which our hearts can be broken over what's happening, the key to facing the future with hope and purpose is to see the hand of God and to worship him as he does his work.

Look with me at chapter 9. You begin to see, like look at verse 8. We'll pick up right where we left off last week. "The Lord sends a message against Jacob, And it falls on Israel. And all the people know it, That is, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, Asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart," and they say this, "The bricks have fallen down, But we will rebuild with smooth stones; The sycamores have been cut down, But we will replace them with cedars." That's that first image of the deforesting that happens. And he's going to say basically, verse 11, then "the LORD raises against them adversaries from Rezin And spurs their enemies on, The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west; And they devour Israel with gaping jaws. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out." That phrase, "in spite of all this," that clause, "His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out," occurs four times in subsequent verses, starting now, three more times after this. He's going to talk about, he's basically saying, "Look at the wrath of God on display," and the refrain, like each verse, it's like a stanza, "Look what he did here," and the refrain is, "In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out." Then he's going to talk about something else, "Look at how God devastates here," and the refrain again, "In

spite of all this, His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out." And he does it again with the same refrain, "In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out." Four times he says that in the subsequent verses.

But look, look what happens though. God is bringing his wrath on his people to wake them up. Look at their response, verse 13, "Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them." The reason God brings his wrath is to draw them back to him. The way to respond to God's wrath and judgment is always humble yourself and run to him. Don't run away from him, run to him because he's a God who in wrath remembers mercy. He's drawing you back to himself. But he says, here, no, they don't turn back to one who struck him, "Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts," verse 13. "So the LORD cuts off head and tail from Israel, Both palm branch and bulrush in a single day."

Skipping on down to chapter, well, verse 17, 9:17, "Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men, Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows; For every one of them is godless and an evildoer, And every mouth is speaking foolishness." Here's the refrain, "In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out." Verse 18, "For wickedness burns like a fire; It consumes briars and thorns; It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame." See there again, the deforestation that's happening because of his wrath. "And they roll upward in a column of smoke." That is the burning of the forest. Look at verse 19, "By the fury of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up, And the people are like fuel for the fire." And look how bad they get as God's wrath comes on. They don't turn to the Lord. Look what happens. Verse 19, the end of 19, "No man spares his brother. They slice off what is on the right hand but still are hungry, And they eat what is on the left hand but they are not satisfied; Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm. Manasseh devours Ephraim," these are the tribes of Israel devouring one another, "and Ephraim Manasseh, And together they are against Judah. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out." You see God's wrath being outpoured.

Chapter 10 verse 1, "Woe to those who enact evil statutes And to those who constantly record unjust decisions, So as to deprive the needy of justice And rob the poor of My people of their rights, So that widows may be their spoil And that they may plunder the orphans. Now what will you do in the day of punishment, And in the devastation which will come from afar?" God's asking the people. "To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your wealth? Nothing remains but to crouch among the captives Or fall among the slain. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out." His wrath is being poured out upon his people.

And so what Isaiah sees that's what's happening is not so much look at the Assyrians and their wickedness because the Assyrians are wicked. They're evil people. They're tyrannical. They were masters of warfare in every way, and they were some of the first who really perfected psychological warfare. They would do things to people to terrorize other cities. They would conquer a city, bring out the leaders, and do horrible things to them where they suffered and died in pain. They were really the first ones, according to historians, that perfected, they are the inventors of crucifixion. For them, it was impaling,

and the Romans later perfected that into what crucifixion was when Jesus was crucified. But they would put people, leaders who had resisted them on a pole, and they would be suffering and dying for hours, and they would put poles all over and say, "This is what happens to those who resist our rule". So the Assyrians were terrible. This is why, when Jonah, remember, a couple hundred years, or 150 years before this, was called to go to Assyria to preach. Nineveh is the capital of Assyria. Remember when Jonah's called to go to Nineveh? He was not happy about that calling. He was so determined not to go to Nineveh, he was willing to die. Remember he got on a boat and went the opposite direction and God calls the sea to go crazy, storm to go crazy. And Jonah doesn't say, "Turn around, I need to go to Nineveh." He says, "Throw me overboard because I want to die. The last thing I want to do is go preach to those wicked Assyrians." And of course, God puts him in a fish, spits him out on the ground, and Jonah finally is like, "Okay, I'm going to go." And then he goes and he preaches, and he preaches a very simple sermon, 40 days and Nineveh is no more, and the people repent and there's a revival in that generation. And then remember what Jonah does? He was the most unhappy evangelist. He goes out, sits outside of Nineveh, and laments the fact that God showed mercy to those wicked Ninevites. The reason he, and the Jews that would have read Jonah were like, they would have understood exactly how he felt. The last people God should show mercy to.

So now think about, now you're in Isaiah's day, 100 plus years after Jonah's ministry, and the Assyrians are coming in and you see the evil of these people and you realize God has brought them because of our sin. He uses these wicked people to judge his own people. And it's so easy to be caught up in the blackness of the darkness rather than see the hand that is moving all of these things. Isaiah had hope and purpose because his eyes were locked on the hand of God. God is the one who's doing this and if we see that, we know, first of all, we're to worship him for who he is. His wrath is a part of his glory. He's determined to punish evil. Isn't that good that God is like that? He deals with all oppressors and all who abuse but that means he deals with us because we all are also guilty of oppression and abuse. We're sinners. When you understand that it's his hand, it gives you comfort and because you know that he's a God who will show mercy to anyone who turns back to him.

So the fierceness of his wrath is something that they see and Isaiah sees, but he says, "It's the wrath of God. Worship Him. Trust Him. His hand is doing all these things. What's happening is He's cutting down the thicket, the forest, okay, He's leveling the forest because of our sin." And that's sad. I mean, have you been to an area that's like, you see after a hurricane or a tornado how trees are just devastated? We used to go to Isle of Palm, South Carolina, which is near Charleston and Hurricane Hugo came in the early '90s. It's amazing what it did. And you know, one of my favorite things that the Lord has done in nature in this area is the live oak tree. You know, massive oak tree with Spanish moss hanging down, lived to be hundreds of years old, and so many of those were just gone. They weren't all gone, but I mean, it was amazing how many trees, I forget hundreds of thousands, probably millions total, but I mean, in the little Isle of Palms, hundreds of thousands. So now, you see that and it's tragic, and it's sad, and this is what they're experiencing. This is their life experience. Look at the devastation that's

happening. But listen, the beauty of God is that when he does all this, even though their sins have brought it on, you know what's happened is all of these trees have been leveled and now you can see way over there that stump that you wouldn't have been able to see and you can see the shoot that begins to rise.

You see, God cleared away and made a way for his Son to be exalted. The beauty of his wrath makes a way for them to see the shoot, this image, the shoot, the springs from the stem of Jesse and the branch from his roots. Beautiful image here. I think he has, because he talks a branch from its roots will bear fruit, I think perhaps Isaiah has in mind the olive tree, which was native to Judah and Israel. Olive trees live, there's some that they think are 2,000 years old now. But the uniqueness of an olive tree in that area is that the stump, it's not uncommon at all to see a stump, a tree cut down, and the stump dry out for a period of time and yet then the rains come and a shoot springs forth and the shoot becomes then a branch and a trunk and a tree from that original stump. This is what he's seeing. This is the image that he's painting for us.

A shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse and a branch from his roots, but the wrath of God, the important thing about this first thing, see God's hand in judgment. If you want stability and hope and purpose, you need to see God's hand in judgment. You and I need to see his hand at work. As he turns over unbelievers, more and more and more, read Romans 1:18 to 32, and you see this, God's wrath being revealed from heaven. His wrath is being revealed, unveiled, made known, made manifest. How's it made known? How's God's wrath made known? What you watch is he lets sinners have their way and go their way. He lets them go into all their sin. Three times the verb, "God gave them over." It's judicial abandonment. God's wrath is revealed as he judicially abandons sinners to go their way and so what we see in America is judicial abandonment happening. He's letting sinners go their way. His wrath is being revealed and what Isaiah learned to do was to see the hand of God and worship him for his righteous wrath. "What You're doing is right, Lord. You're showing that Your ways are true."

That is interesting, I was thinking about this. One of the most probably arguably the greatest piece of music written outside of the Psalter, divinely inspired music of the Psalter would be Handel's Messiah. Can you think of something more wonderful than Handel's Messiah? The Hallelujah Chorus, "For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. King of kings, Lord of lords, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever." You know where those verses come from? Revelation 12:15, Revelation 19:6, and following. You know what's happening there? You know what leads to that kind of worship, that incredible worship that just grips your heart? "He shall reign forever and ever. The Lord God Almighty reigns. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth," is a direct quotation. That's the King James version of the "Lord God Almighty reigns." It happens as the wrath of God is being poured out when Jesus comes to defeat his enemies. That's the greatest act of worship we see in the Scriptures is when God comes to defeat his enemies. Now, when God is displaying his wrath, this is saying it's right to worship him. It's a mixed thing for us because we know we deserve his wrath, but the reason we can worship him is because we found that there's a safe place from his wrath. His Son is actually the one who bears the

wrath of any who will come to hi. in the cross. But we shall worship God as he pours out his wrath.

So see God's hand in judgment, that's the first point. The second point, which really gets into the text of Isaiah 11, the context was see God's hand in judgment, now number two, submit to Christ's rule. Submit to Christ's rule. There's four subpoints under number two because the picture he gives us of Jesus in the first five verses is glorious. The first thing to note is his identity. There's four subpoints I said. Submit to Christ's rule. To whom are you submitting? The identity of the one you submit to is the first thing he calls out. That's what he point in verse 1, the shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse. The other translations say stump. I like that better. "The shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit." It's interesting that he's talking about the line of David, but he uses here uniquely the name Jesse. Jesse was David's father. And he does that again in verse 10, "Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse." He doesn't say the stem of David. He doesn't say the root of David in these verses. He says Jesse. Why is that? I think what he's saying is, listen, the reason, what is the stump itself? You could say the stump is the people of God, yes, but more precisely the stump or the tree that has been felled is the line of David. It is God's promise to bring salvation through the family tree of David. And it was chopped down finally in 586 when the Babylonians destroyed the temple and the palace and carry off the final Jews and the king, and the Davidic monarchy ended with Jehoiachin. He's the last one to reign, as it were, as truly a Davidic king until Jesus. So the stump is the end of the monarchy but what happens is the shoot comes off of Jesse. What's he saying? It's not one in the line of David. Jesus is a new David. One greater than David has come. Yeah, he's in the line of David. Yes, he is. But the emphasis on the stem of Jesse, the stump of Jesse, the roots of Jesse is saying something more than that. We have someone greater than David, a new David. The true David has come.

That's his identity. Then next emphasizes his ability. Second subpoint, 2B, his ability. Verse 2, "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him," and he emphasizes his ability in that he is the uniquely anointed of God. In anointing, the anointing oil symbolizes the Spirit. He is uniquely anointed with the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, and he speaks basically the Spirit that is upon this one to come, who is now a new David and who's going to reestablish the kingdom, the shoot that springs out from the olive stump, he will be empowered by the Spirit. And he tells us seven things about the Spirit that is upon him. Seven, the number of perfection.

First of all, it's the spirit of the Lord and it rests on him. Remember how John the Baptist recognized Jesus? He said, "The One that God told me to come and prepare the way for," how will you recognize him? He will be the one in whom the Spirit descends and rests upon him. And when he saw Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." He's the one.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him and then he gives three couplets. These next six points are in three pairs. The spirit of wisdom and understanding, he will have an incredible perfect wisdom and understanding. Wisdom, the idea of knowing how God's



will relates to all of life and understanding that is actually the application of wisdom to a specific issue. He will see how everything fits together perfectly and he will always apply it perfectly in the moment.

But not only the spirit of wisdom and understanding, but the spirit of counsel and strength. Other translations say might, the spirit of counsel and might. These words are used in chapter 36 and verse 5 to speak of counsel and might in the sense of strategy and power in warfare. And so here, he's not only one who has wisdom and understanding, but he knows how to win. He knows exactly what to do to be victorious. So the king that is coming, the new David, that we're to look to because all the trees have been knocked down and this new David that comes, he's going to have the perfection of wisdom, the ability to apply it perfectly and understanding. He's going to know how to win the war. He's going to be the divine warrior, the perfect champion that will defeat Satan in every turn.

And the last couple, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. This is knowledge of the Lord and the fear of the Lord. He will know the Father with a perfect knowledge. He will revere and stand in awe as a human being and as humanity of the Father in the way God intends man to live. He knows the Father, he stands in awe of the Father. That's his ability. He is anointed with the Spirit so that all these things are true of him.

So not just his identity, submit to Christ's rule, his identity, B, his ability, thirdly, his character, C, his character. Verses 3A and 5 kind of brackets this next section with an emphasis on his character. "He will delight in the fear of the LORD." This idea of delight, the word verb here, delight is related to the word for smell. It's like you smell something that delights you. You know, certain aromas that are delightful, aren't there, and the power of the way God made the sense of smell. I mean, you can have smells that are just so, you know, despicable, and you can have smells that are so incredibly engaging of the heart and the affections. What engages the heart and affections of this one to come is he will delight in the fear of the Lord. His meat and his drink will be to do the will of his Father who sent him. He will continually live before the face of his Father. He will live as man was intended to live. He will do so gloriously.

And not only that, verse 5, and "righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist." He will want to conform his life to be right, that is straight, exactly with everything that God's will is. He will conform everything in his life to that. That will be his heart disposition, his character, and to be faithful to every charge that God has given him.

That's his character. Then his effectiveness, the effectiveness of his reign. The reason you submit to him, the identity of Christ, he's the second David, the ability, he's uniquely empowered with the Spirit, his character, he's perfectly righteous and trustworthy, and then lastly, he is amazingly effective. That's what he's talking about in 3B and 4. Look at verse 3, after he says he will delight in the fear of the Lord, he says this, this is what we're getting at in effectiveness, "He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision

by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth." He will be able to see beyond what is visible and he will always judge perfectly. You know, in our world, the judgments that you may get if you go to court, the judgments that happen are dependent upon people finding the evidence, presenting the evidence, then people understanding it correctly, the jury deciding according to what really has been presented, and it really feels like in many circumstances, it's just up in the air. If you find yourself on trial, you just pray that God's going to help the people to see the truth. You know you're innocent, but you may not be found innocent. But with Jesus as King and Judge, he always judges perfectly. He never misses it because he sees the unseen and he judges from the heart.

This is the King that you submit to. So you submit to a King who is the true one of God, the true David. He has all the ability, empowered by the Spirit. His character is perfect righteousness and faithfulness, and he always does what is right. And not only does he judge correctly, look what he says next at the end of verse 4, "He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked." You go to a King and you submit to a King who by the power of his word carries out his will. I mean, he doesn't have to say go do it, his word does it. That's what he's saying. His word is the rod of his mouth. He speaks and he destroys his enemies. In fact, back in Revelation 19, you know what happens? As the one who's faithful and true riding on the white horse, what happens? A sword comes out of his mouth and slays the wicked. The sword is the word of God. It's his word. So you come to a King who by his very word accomplishes his will. This is who Jesus is. So submit to him. Why would you resist someone like that? Only insanity could cause you to do that.

So submit to Christ's rule. This means, listen, to submit to Christ's rule, you have to repent and believe the gospel. Believe that he is who he said he is, that he's a God who will judge everyone who stands against him and it will be a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a holy God. But he says, "Today is the day of salvation. Repent and come to Me and be saved." That's what Jesus says. If you are alive, it's not too late to come to Christ. Now, having said that, don't put off coming one moment longer in assuming that you can do it later because God's wrath is revealed as we reject him. When we see him, he hardens. That's one of the things he does. He turns you over. And what you had seen before, light rejected is so often followed by deeper darkness. So young people, you're being brought up in Christian homes, you're being taught the gospel by your parents, you're coming to church, you're hearing this message today about Jesus and his worthiness, receive him, believe in him, don't delay. Why would you do anything else? Such a glorious King and Savior.

Submit to Christ's rule. Thirdly, seek God's glory or seek Christ's glory, really the glory of Christ's rule. Let's say seek Christ's glory. Verses 6 to 9 of Isaiah 11. This description, which is just amazing, "the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them." This is picturing the return to Eden, the return of Eden to the world, the beauty of that. There's no longer all the hostility that was unleashed by sin. The old hostilities are removed.

"The wolf will dwell with the lamb." In fact, one of the commentators points out that this "dwell with," kind of live with, it pictures really a sense of an invitation, responding to an invitation. It's like the lamb sees the wolf and says, "Come on in and let's spend time together." And you're not going to see that among a lamb and a wolf in this day, right? But in the day to come, you are. Jesus is going to make it so that it's like that. That's the way it was originally.

Hostilities are ended, verse 6, the leopard and the young goat, the calf, the young lion, a little boy leading them. The picture is that man is in authority. Even a little boy can tell the animals what to do. This picture, a little boy walking around, he's telling the animals what to do and they do exactly what he says. He doesn't need bit and bridle to get the horse to do what he says. He just speaks and the horse does it. The horse isn't here, but the horse would definitely do that if the leopard and the lion and the wolf were doing it. I think that's a good inference.

Verse 7, it changes now from the emphasis on the old hostilities being taken away, now to look at the change, the radical change of nature that has been wrought about by Christ and his rule. These are the blessings that come when you submit to Christ's rule. When you submit to the King we talked about who had the Spirit that is characterized by a perfect knowledge and all power, when you submit to him, this is what happens, you have a new nature. The cow and the bear graze. That's about what they eat. The bear wants to eat grass. The lion eats straw. That is, everybody's a vegetarian again. I know on the surface for a lot of us, that doesn't sound good. I mean, I have to confess, I, you know, have a steak, but it's going to be so much better when we don't eat steak anymore. It's going to be, now I don't advocate at all, you know, I'm a strong advocate of eating meat in the present world because God told us to, so just remember that. But in the future, in the future, it is going to be glorious to eat of the fruit of the land and to do it alongside the animals and to never eat an animal again. And I'm telling you, the tomato, which is already pretty darn good, is going to be better than a steak. And an apple is going to be more wonderful than anything else, and we're going to eat the grass of the field even, and it's going to be tremendous. And the beauty of the harmony that comes because of the new nature. He's reversed the hostilities. He's changed nature.

And look at verse 8, he has completely eradicated the curse. Do you see that? What was the curse? What was the thing that God said to Adam and Eve and to the serpent? To the serpent, he said, "I will put enmity between your seed and the woman's seed," the serpent and the child. And look now, the baby, when it says verse 8, the nursing child, it's talking about an infant, just kind of barely rolling over, crawling a little bit. He's crawling and edging up to the cobra's hole and all is well. And then his toddler brother or sister comes up and puts their hand in the nest and is playing with the snakes inside. This is what Christ has done. Everything is right. Nothing out of order anymore. All hostilities ended. What must that mean for you and me?

Now, when is this? Is it future? Yes and no. For Isaiah, it was all future. The Jews who read this, when they first received it, they looked ahead and they saw, hey, he's telling us

more about that infant that's going to be born to a virgin. He's telling us more in chapter 11 about the Son who will be given to us and the government will rest upon his shoulders and his name's called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He's telling us more about him. Those were about his birth, now he's talking about his adult reign. He's talking about the ministry and life of Christ, and he's describing it. What Jesus was like is the things that we just read about. The Spirit was upon him. He could see perfectly. He judged perfectly. He accomplished God's work. But think about this, to the people reading in Isaiah's day, they saw when he comes he makes verses 6 to 9 a reality then. Then and in the future. But then, what's he talking about? He makes these things spiritually true in the people of God. He reverses the curse completely among his people who bow down before his throne.

These verses should characterize the way you and I relate. If you are in a Christian home, even if you're not, the way you relate should be just like what he's talking about. The wolf can dwell with the lamb. The leopard can lie down with a young goat. Old hostilities are ended in Christ. When you come to the cross and you bow the knee before Jesus, old hostilities die. Ethnic tensions, socioeconomic tensions, the effects of sins against one another, bitterness is meant to evaporate when you are submitted to King Jesus. We're to live like this now. This is the glorious opportunity we have. The world is going to hell in a handbasket. It's getting darker. We can praise God and worship him as it happens. "Lord, Your wrath is wonderful. Your wrath is just. And we know that when You bring your wrath, You're actually going to be inviting people to get saved. You're waking up this crazy generation that is going nuts. You're waking them up to say Jesus is the only way and You will save them if they look to You. But in the meantime, You're wanting us to live as a signpost saying, 'This is what He does to those who submit to Him. He makes your life like this.'" He makes it so that you, the old hostilities are ended, a new nature where we desire different things. We don't desire to eat the same things we did. We don't desire to eat one another. Remember the picture we saw of Manasseh eating Ephraim and Ephraim Manasseh. Now listen, the Scripture says it's a reality we have to fight against. We have to walk by faith to live this out. Galatians 5, I think it's verse 12 or 13 says, be careful that you not bite and devour one another. He's talking to Christians then. Be careful that you not do that. But he's calling us to live by grace. How can you get rid of hostilities and enmities? You forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you. You look at the mercy of Jesus to you and me, we look at that and then we extend forgiveness and love and grace to our brothers and sisters.

And the curse that brought division, we're a place of blessing now. This is what we looked at a few weeks ago in 1 Peter, our last passage. Remember, we talked about when you are reviled, you don't revile again. When you're insulted, you don't return insult for insult, don't return reviling for reviling. But what? A blessing because we don't do evil anymore. We do good as those who follow Christ. Now, we often do evil. Yes, we do. In our sin nature, we do but we're called to something greater than that. We're called to repent when we do, to confess when we do, and we are called as Christians, if you belong to Jesus Christ, you must forgive every sin that ever happens to you. You must. If you won't, it calls into question whether you have received his forgiveness at all in the first place. And when you are filled with the wonder of what he's forgiven you, when we

come to see that, and we bask in the wonder of what he's forgiven me, and think about that, I know what a sinner I am, and you know what a sinner you are, and you face that honestly, and you marvel that he has forgiven you, and keeps on forgiving you and your brother sins against you. I mean, you want to help them, you've got to confront sin, yes, but it's not to get revenge. It's not to make them hurt, it's to help them repent and get back before the throne of Jesus on their knees where we want to live, right beside me, get beside Jesus on our knees. That's the place where the leopard lies down with the lamb.

He's called us to that. You and I, this is the purpose for which we should be living right now. Live this out. "Let your light so shine before men that they see your good works and glorify your Father who's in heaven." Seek God's glory in relationships. That's the answer. Now, fourthly, We not only see God's hand in judgment and worship him, we not only submit to Christ's rule because he's worthy, we not only seek God's glory in relationship, especially in the body. Now listen, I'm going to say one more thing about that. You also show kindness to unbelievers. That's, in fact, the exact purpose of the verses I was just talking about. When he's saying bless and don't curse, when you look at it carefully in context, he's talking about when you're dealing with unbelievers. They revile you for Christ's sake, you bless them. Only blessing.

So you seek God's glory by living out this new heart in relationship within the church and even to those outside, and then fourthly, see God's hand in salvation. Isaiah shows this picture again and again that God brings salvation through judgment. This is actually a key theme in all of Scripture, especially the prophets. Salvation comes through judgment. God knocks down all the trees so that he can then bring the sprout up, and you can see it. Think about it in your own life. Many of you, your testimony is, you know, I didn't get saved until God showed me by just wrecking my life, letting me wreck my life, right? He just lets you do what you wanted to do or let somebody else do to you something that they wanted to do. He wrecked your life. Many of you, that's your testimony. And in the wreckage, you looked up and you were able to see Christ. Would you trade anything for that moment? Wasn't God good to do that? It wakes us up out of our slumber, we're trifling with silly things, living life like this is all that there is. And he graciously, he knocks things down and says, "Look to my Son. Come and live with Me forever."

So his hand comes in judgment, but his hand comes in salvation. Look at verse 10. Well, verse 9 and 10, "They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples." He's saying, look, when we live like this, when Christ comes and his government becomes real, and you begin to see the radical impact of his rule in the lives of his people, which is the harmony that we were talking about in verses 6 to 9, begins to be lived out because if you are submitted to Jesus, and the more you submit to Jesus, the more you look like that, the more our relationships will look like that. To the degree that our relationships don't look like that, the issue is the Lordship of Christ for you and me. As we do though, and we begin to look like this, what happens? The nations start streaming to where we are.

That's the picture. In that day, the nations, the goyim, the ungodly, the Gentiles will resort to the root of Jesse. They will come running to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal. I love this image of the stand as a signal. It's a signal pole. It's a word used throughout the Old Testament to speak of raising a banner. In fact, this word nissat is actually nissi, Jehovah-nissi or Yahweh-nissi, the Lord my banner from Exodus. But the idea is you raise a banner that people can see from far away and you're to rally to the banner. What happened, the normal usage of this was if there was a military invasion, now think about it, a military invasion before the cell phone, before the phone, before the walkie talkie, you don't have any way to communicate, there's an invasion, what do you do? You raise the banner high up so that people see that's the banner saying we're being invaded. What happens? Everybody grab your weapon, run to the banner, rally there to fight together against the enemy. He's saying what's going to happen is when we are living like this, we're triumphing over the evil one who came to steal and kill and destroy, who came to divide, who's a liar and a murderer. When we fight against him and Jesus begins winning among us, it's like he's setting up the banner in all the unbelievers as the world is going to hell in a handbasket, they feel the force of the invasion of evil getting darker, even though they still don't have Christ, they see us living like this and it's this banner and they start flowing and flooding toward the banner, running to what we have.

This is the beauty and glory of what God does in Christ. This is what Jesus was talking about when he said, "If you love one another as I've loved you," remember after he's washed their feet, "a new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you. By this, by this, all men will know that you are My disciples by your love one for another." Chapter 17, same night, few hours later, John 17, Jesus prays, "Father, I pray for those that you've given Me. Not that you take them out of the world. No, they've got to stay in the world. The world is going to be full of tribulation. But Lord, I pray that they may be one, even as We are One that the world may know that You sent Me."

It's the oneness of the people of God is the banner. The oneness happens through the cross. Ephesians 2:11 to 14. How did Gentile and Jew become one? In the cross. He abolished the enmity, the hatred. the bitterness, it all dies in the cross and so what we have to do as Christians to live this out is continually go to the cross ourselves, asking him for forgiveness, marveling at his grace and the cost he paid for our salvation and in that, as we do that, we have oneness in him. The world looks and says, there is something supernatural about them. In fact, the idea really here is a supernatural attractiveness of the people of God living like this.

That's the picture in verse 10. They're resorting, they're being drawn to that, and they're coming to "His resting place will be glorious." This is beautiful. His resting place. This is used again and again in the Old Testament to speak of like Canaan was a resting place. The ark rested. It's God's glory resting and his people resting with him. It's like sitting down together and fellowshiping together. That's the picture. And the resting place will be glorious. When you and I live like this, we find that we are right there with God in his presence. His resting place is glorious. Christ is exalted when we fight through difficulties and live like this and his glory is made known in such a powerful way that people stream and hurry to find what we have.

And so in the midst of a world that's going down, if it keeps on like it is, don't be overwhelmed by the rapidity of the decline in descent into evil. Praise God for his justice and his wrath. Worship him for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, King of kings and Lord of lords, and just recommit yourself to submit to King Jesus. "Lord, may Your will be done, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Let it start right here in my heart. Lord, let me labor and pursue peace with my brothers and sisters so that the hostilities are ended, the nature is changed, the curse is gone, blessing is flowing, and then we will see Your hand drawing sinners to salvation." We live in a wonderful time, a time of opportunity, the best time to be alive because you know why? God has you alive right now. He intended you to be in this moment and if you will live for him, if we will live for him and submit to him, we will see his glory.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.