

Finding Jesus in Isaiah

Isaiah 11:1-16

Pastor Tom

February 2, 2020

Malcolm Muggeridge was a British journalist who lived from 1903-1990. He was raised in a home that believed humankind could solve all its problems with the right government and programs. He began his career writing short stories and articles for newspapers. In 1932, the Manchester Guardian newspaper assigned him to work in Moscow. This was during the terrorizing reign of Josef Stalin. Muggeridge looked forward to seeing how this society worked. He was soon disillusioned by the fact that a government watchman accompanied him wherever he went. And all his articles for the Guardian newspaper had to pass through a Russian government censor.

So Muggeridge took a big risk. He had his Russian interpreter buy him a train ticket for a several day journey that would go from Moscow through the Ukraine and to a city called Rostov. There were rumors of a great famine in Ukraine. He writes "My journey to Rostov remains in my mind as a nightmare memory. The worn railway compartment with glasses of tea endlessly served, had other passengers coming and going, who were mostly Communist party officials. They were open to talk and friendly and put up with my basic Russian language skills. But they immediately closed up when I brought up the subject of what was going on outside the train."¹

He goes on "I can never forget what I saw. . . . A famine hit the Ukraine. It was not just a famine but a state of war... The communists Russians force peasant farmers & their families off their land. Their land. They took their crops & cattle and forced them to join large common farms... I saw abandoned villages, the absence of livestock, neglected fields, frightened people. One early morning at a railway station I stumbled on a scene where peasants, with their hands tied behind their backs, were being loaded into cattle trucks at gun point."²

Then he writes, "In Kiev (a major city in Ukraine), where I found myself on a Sunday morning, on an impulse I turned into a church where a service was in progress. It was packed tight, but I managed to squeeze myself against a pillar from where I could survey the congregation and look up at the altar. Young, old, peasants, townsmen, parents, children, even a few soldiers in uniform worshipped together. . . . Never before have I participated in such worship; the sense conveyed of turning to God in great affliction was overpowering. Though I could not understand the words, I knew bits of the service. For instance, where the congregation say, "There is no help for us save from God." What intense feeling they

¹ Malcolm Muggeridge, *Chronicles of Wasted Time, An Autobiography*, Regent College Publishing, 2006, 256.

² Muggeridge, 257.

put into these words! In their minds as in mine were the abandoned villages, the hunger and the hopelessness and the cattle trucks being loaded with human cargo in the early dawn light. Where could they turn for help? Not Stalin's government or the forces of progress, democracy and enlightenment in the West. Every possible human agency was found wanting. So only God remained, and to God they turned with a passion and dedication, a humility, impossible to convey. They took me with them; I felt closer to God then than I ever had before, or am likely to again."³ Muggeridge eventually became a Christian with a long journalistic career. But the forced famine in Ukraine is estimated to have cost the lives of between 3.5 - 7 million people.

The people in that church that day cried out "There is no help for us save from God." Do you believe that? I wonder if one of our great challenges today is that we have so many resources that, we only turn to God as the very last resort. Consider this statement. **Jesus can provide everything we need.** Do you believe that? Your answer may depend on past experience you have with God and your needs.

If you had some great need and Jesus provided, you might agree with the statement. But maybe you asked for something that you did not receive from Jesus. That would likely affect your confidence in His ability or concern to address your needs.

But if we grow in our knowledge and understanding of Jesus, we can learn about the types of needs He met for people in the Scriptures. Then we might see more about the ways He can provide for us now.

Today, we will discover more about Jesus in Isaiah. I've entitled this series of messages "Following Jesus through Isaiah." But today's passage enables us to actually find Jesus in Isaiah. I want you to see 4 characteristics or actions that Jesus fulfilled. We will see how these can help some specific needs in our lives. We will then conclude by bringing our needs to Jesus in prayer. So please find Isaiah 11 in your Bibles or on your devices. You can also find it on page 495 in the Bibles in front of you.

Isaiah 11 (ESV)

11 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

²And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,

³ Muggeridge, 259.

the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

⁹They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

¹¹In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

¹²He will raise a signal for the nations
and will assemble the banished of Israel,
and gather the dispersed of Judah
from the four corners of the earth.

¹³The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart,
and those who harass Judah shall be cut off;
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,
and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

¹⁴But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west,
and together they shall plunder the people of the east.

They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab,
and the Ammonites shall obey them.

¹⁵And the LORD will utterly destroy
the tongue of the Sea of Egypt,
and will wave his hand over the River
with his scorching breath,
and strike it into seven channels,
and he will lead people across in sandals.

¹⁶And there will be a highway from Assyria
for the remnant that remains of his people,
as there was for Israel
when they came up from the land of Egypt.

Last week, we were in Isaiah 6. The last verse, in that chapter described the coming downfall of the kingdom of Judah. The Lord says “And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.”

Then in chapters 7, 8 and 9, we come to the story we looked at before Christmas. Isaiah calls the current King of Judah, Ahaz, to put his trust in the Lord despite the great threat from the superpower Assyria. But Ahaz refuses the Lord’s help. So the Lord announces that He will send a child who will rescue the people. Then in chapter 10, verse 33, 34 there is this image of the Lord cutting down a great forest. So the Lord would eventually cut down Assyria.

So Judah will be cut down by Assyria and left like a tree stump. Then the Lord will cut down the forest of Assyria and leave a whole bunch of tree stumps. But Judah’s tree stump still has life in it. We saw that in Isaiah 6:13 – The holy seed is its stump.

Now look again at Isaiah 11:1. “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” A shoot is a small sprout of a plant. Jesse was King David’s father. So this initial phrase predicts that a new king will arise. But He will not just be another king from the line of David. Isaiah identifies the shoot coming from Jesse not Judah. Only Jesse’s sons came directly from Jesse. So this shoot represents a new David. He will not only bring new life. He will grow to become a branch that becomes a tree which will bear fruit. So this shoot is actually a person; a new David; the Messiah or anointed one that the Jews looked to for deliverance.

The rest of Isaiah 11 describes this new David. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled this hope. Jesus is the new David. Look at what the new David receives in verse 2. “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.”

But it's not only the Spirit of the Lord, it's the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear of the Lord." That's a lot of spirit. There's actually 7 different facets or functions of the Spirit. It reminds us of another awesome image of Jesus in Revelation 5:6 – "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God," or seven-fold Spirit of God. Likely, Isaiah 11:2 refers to the same 7 fold Spirit of the Lord.

So look at the many characteristics of the Spirit that rests upon this new David. It is first and foremost the Spirit of the Lord. So this means this new David will have divine power. He has the Spirit of wisdom, a rare capacity for comprehensive judgment coupled with an ability to put this judgment into practical use. He has the Spirit of understanding, an ability to decide between various possibilities and to choose the best course. He has the Spirit of counsel which is an ability to devise a plan for a situation and see its many sided complexity. He has the Spirit of Action or Might. That is an ability to execute the plan devised.

But He also has the Spirit of knowledge to guide and instruct in ways that honor the Lord. Then He has the Spirit of fear of the Lord. So this is a spirit of reverence for God with appropriate humility.

So think about one need we all have. **We need: Counsel and Wisdom to make decisions.** If you face a decision today, you would likely appreciate good counsel and wisdom. Have you turned to the new David for His counsel? **The 7 fold spirit of God will rest upon Him to give perfect insight (1:2-3).** So we need to access Jesus' wisdom and counsel. How? We ask for it in prayer. Jesus can speak His wisdom and counsel to our spirit. But then we test whatever we sense from Jesus in His Word. The Bible contains the written counsel and wisdom of Jesus. We find principles and direction that will help us make the decisions that face us. Psalm 18:30 – As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless."

T. Keller – Because the Bible is the Word of our creator, it is our soul's "owner's manual." The things it commands are the very things we were created to do. So Godly wisdom comes from relating to God not just as a general divine being but as our creator. So turn to the flawless word of the Lord. We need to trust the Lord's counsel and wisdom more than our own understanding. If you need to make a decision, turn to the one who has the 7 fold Spirit of God upon Him.

Next, let's think about our need for **Justice and healing from bitterness.** Everyone in this room has sinned. But we have also been sinned against. Some of you have endured some great injustices in your life. Your offenders may not have

faced justice or repented of their sin against you. Some of us may carry bitterness because of these unresolved injustices. So we struggle.

But the New David **will rule with justice and righteousness (1:3-5)**. Look at the end of verse 3. “He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear.” Well that’s good because appearances can be deceiving. Sometimes criminals hire people who twist facts to create doubt about their guilt. Some bribe the judges. Human judges make mistakes and show weakness when threatened or bribed. But the new David will not judge by appearances. Nor will he be swayed by gossip or slander. He will (verse 4) judge the poor with righteousness and decide with equity for the meek.” He will look out for and bring justice to those who don’t have the means to get justice in a corrupt system.

Not only will the new David pronounce justice. He will carry out the verdict. Notice in the last half of verse 4 that he carries out justice against the wicked just by speaking. His word releases power against those who have not repented of their crimes. This justice will not be some fleeting priority during His administration. Verse 5 tells us that righteousness shall be the belt of his waist. The belt pulled all the flowing garments together and gathered them around the hips. So righteousness clothes the new David. The belt of his loins refers to the under belt that tied the under garment to the waist. So this belt was closer to the body. Faithfulness is close to the body of the new David.

All injustice will be called to account and paid. This may happen in this life. But if not, it will certainly happen on Judgment Day. So entrust to Him the injustices done to you. We may need to pursue the justice we can get in this life. But we ultimately need to let Him look after it. Then we can be released from any bitterness that may cripple our lives today or that we harbor towards those who have sinned against us.

Next we come to the need for **Reconciliation with God and others**. Reconciliation involves bringing together two formerly hostile parties who resolve their differences and live with a restored relationship. Well starting in verse 6, we get an amazing picture of reconciliation with these animals.

Creatures formerly at war will live together in peace. Predators lie down with their prey instead of eating them. Why Jesus? Even young children will not be in danger from formerly poisonous snakes. **His reign will bring a deep reconciliation that permeates all nature. 1:6-9**

How do we interpret the beautiful picture painted in verses 6-9?

We could interpret this literally. Some conclude this picture describes life on the new heaven and earth once Jesus returns. There will be a profound transformation of the natural world so that creatures will no longer hunt or threaten each other. That's one possibility.

Some interpret these images to represent aggressor and vulnerable nations during Isaiah's time. The Lord will bring reconciliation between people from all those nations one day.

Or this could simply portray the ability of the Lord to bring reconciliation between the most unexpected former enemies. In his kingdom, there will be no more war between humans nor in nature. I believe these verses do portray a picture of a future time when we will see a profound change in our world. But this future perfect reconciliation points to the possibility of reconciliation today.

We need to be reconciled first with God and then with others. 2 Corinthians 5:20 states "We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Then we must reconcile with others even though it may be imperfect. We have talked before about how reconciliation requires both parties to come together. If there is an offender and offended, the offender needs to acknowledge and repent. Matthew 5:23-24. Jesus says, "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First, be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. Romans 12:18. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." We need reconciliation. We can receive the power to reconcile from Jesus – the one who will create this incredible kingdom.

The last need this passage raises is also one everyone lives with. We need God. **We need obstacles cleared so we and others can come God.** So look at what the new David does starting in verse 10. "In that day, the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal for the peoples." A signal or standard was like a banner or a flag. During ancient battles the king had flags raised to guide or rally his troops. No (radio Communication). In moments of confusion, he would raise his standard and blow trumpets so his troops come to Him. Well here, the Lord raises His standard and invites people from all nations to come to Him.

Then in verse 11, we hear about the Lord extending his hand a second time to bring people from all nations to Himself. What's the first time? The Exodus. The Lord extended his hand to bring Israel out of slavery in Egypt. But now the Lord will extend his hand a second time to bring all nations to Himself.

Look how he does this. Verse 12. He raises the signal for the nations and the scattered Jews. But sometimes when people come together for a homecoming they're reminded of a family feud. An unreconciled quarrel lies beneath the surface. There was a quarrel within the people of Israel. They split into two kingdoms; the north known as Israel or Ephraim; the south known as Judah. But in verse 13 the Lord will somehow reconcile and solve this dispute.

Then in verse 15 we see the Lord deal with natural obstacles to people's return. The tongue of the sea of Egypt could be the Nile delta. You could not walk across it. You had to make a major detour to get around it. So this pictures the Lord drying that up so they can come to Him. Another natural obstacle was the great river – the Euphrates. But the Lord will dry it up into 7 small streams so people can walk over it in their sandals. These images show the Lord removing obstacles so people can return to Him. **He will open the way for people from everywhere to come to Him.** So we need come to Him. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." John 14:6. If you have already come to Him, think of all God did to bring you Himself. Think of the obstacles He removed, the paths He cleared and the people He brought to bring you along. Then we need to join His obstacles-clearing work in the lives of others. Maybe we are one piece of that journey for someone else to God.

Maybe today is the final step for your coming to God. He's been working in your life for a long time or maybe just recently. But suddenly you see how He has brought you to Himself to this day. I want to invite you to take the final step in your journey to God today. You can acknowledge Him as Lord over all. You can acknowledge the shoot from the stump of Jesse as your savior. You will need to admit your sin and need for forgiveness. But then you trust your whole self and life onto Jesus. You can do that now in your own prayers or in a moment when we pray.

So where have we been today?

The people in that church in Kiev in 1932 cried out "there is no help for us save from God." You & I have needs today. But have we brought them to Jesus?

We don't have to wait for the shoot from Jesse's stump to arrive. Jesus has already come. His wisdom and counsel is already available to us through prayer and His Word. He will ensure justice will be done completely and thoroughly. So we can let go our bitterness and entrust it to Him. He can bring reconciliation between God and your loved ones who don't know Christ. So continue to pray for His work in their lives. He removed obstacles so you could come to Him. So

rejoice and rest in that. Join him in the advance of His righteous and faithful reign. Then look forward with hope to His coming kingdom.

So let us bring our needs to Jesus now.