

You Don't Know

What You Don't Know

Series: *Where the Spirit of the Lord Is.* **Texts:** *Isaiah 11:1–5; Isaiah 42:1–4; Isaiah 61:1–3.*

Act 1 **Opening the Curtain**

Have you ever spent hours trying to solve a problem... only to discover you were not solving the real problem?

Maybe you hear a strange noise, spend half a Saturday watching YouTube mechanics with spotless garages and alarming confidence, replace the part—and the noise is still there. Only now you have the original noise and a new light on the dashboard.

Sometimes the problem we can see is not the real problem. Sometimes there is a problem beneath the problem.

Years ago in advertising, I was taught to ask:

“What is the benefit of the benefit?”

Someone does not simply want a better drill. They want the project finished so they can enjoy what they were building. The drill is useful, but it is not the final thing they are after.

As I prepared this message, I began wondering whether there might be a spiritual version of that question. If there can be a benefit beneath the benefit, could there also be a problem beneath the problem?

We pray for stronger faith, healthier marriages, healing, wisdom, our children, and peace in circumstances we cannot control. Those are good prayers. God cares about what burdens us.

But what if we know what hurts... without yet understanding what we truly need?

You don't know what you don't know.

That thought has followed me through Isaiah because Israel knew it had problems. Its leaders were corrupt. Its worship had become hollow. Justice was unreliable. Foreign armies threatened the nation.

Had you asked someone in Isaiah's day, "What does Israel need?" the answers might have come quickly: a better king, deliverance from its enemies, security, restoration.

And those answers were not wrong.

God had repeatedly met Israel in its need. As we have seen throughout this series, the Spirit gave skill to craftsmen, wisdom to leaders, power to judges, authority to kings, and words to prophets. These were not insignificant moments. God truly worked through these people, and Israel truly benefited from what He did.

But none of them brought the story to completion. The same question remains: what is the problem beneath the problem? What core need lies beneath all the others?

The craftsmen could construct a place of worship, Judges could defeat an enemy, Kings could rule, Prophets could speak the truth. All were necessary. None were completely sufficient.

Every intervention was real.

And still... something more was needed.

That is where we arrive this morning.

Until now, we have largely asked what the Holy Spirit did through particular people in particular moments. Isaiah shows us another dimension of the Spirit's work and speaks into that unfinished story. He begins in an unexpected place.

Not with what appears powerful.

Not with what looks successful.

But with what appears to be finished-almost dead... it begins with a stump.

Let's read together our first passage, Isaiah 11:1-5.

Act 2 **More Than a Better King**

Isaiah 11:1–5 (ESV)

The Righteous Reign of the Branch

11 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And 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, 4 but 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. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

There is life in the stump. No throne. No army. Only a shoot growing out of what seemed dead.

Notice whose stump this is. Isaiah does not say David. He says Jesse.

Jesse takes us behind the palace, back to Bethlehem and the family nobody expected God to choose.

God is returning to the promise: a new David, a better King.

Israel probably expected a stronger king who could defeat its enemies. But Isaiah begins not with strategy or charisma, but character.

“The LORD’s Spirit will rest on him.”

In Israel’s history, the Spirit came upon people for particular tasks, but they remained flawed.

Samson had strength without restraint. Saul had authority without obedience. David loved God but still fell.

Their gifting exceeded their character.

But this King is different. The Spirit will not merely come upon Him. He will rest.

No gap between power and holiness. This King can be trusted.

Wisdom. Understanding. Counsel. Might. Knowledge. The fear of the Lord.

Israel knew what happens when rulers possess some without the others: might without wisdom becomes brutality; knowledge without fear of God becomes arrogance; authority without righteousness becomes oppression.

Israel needed a King whose every strength was governed by perfect holiness.

Then Isaiah says:

"His delight will be in the fear of the LORD."

Not duty—delight.

The safest person with authority is the one who delights in God's authority. Because of that, He sees clearly, defends the overlooked, and judges with righteousness.

That should comfort us—and unsettle us—because this King confronts evil.

"With the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked."

That is not usually the verse printed on a Christmas card. But it belongs in the portrait.

The Spirit reveals a holy King.

Israel wanted wickedness defeated outside its borders. The Spirit reveals a King who confronts it wherever it is found.

And that becomes uncomfortable, because the problem beneath the problem passes through the human heart—including mine and yours.

Israel needed a King who could defeat sin without being corrupted by power: confronting evil without committing it, exercising authority without exploiting, possessing power without using it selfishly.

Israel did not merely need a better king. It needed this King.

The Spirit does not confirm the Saviour we imagined. He reveals the Saviour we need.

Many of us would gladly receive Jesus as adviser, comfort, or crisis manager. But Isaiah reveals a King.

And kings do not merely make suggestions. They rule.

So perhaps the question is not simply, "Do I believe in Jesus?"

Perhaps it is: Do I recognize the Jesus the Spirit has revealed?

The One who knows me fully, judges rightly, defends the vulnerable, confronts evil, and can be trusted with absolute authority.

A King we can trust.

And yet this same King is described this way:

He will not break a bruised reed.

How can He be both powerful and gentle?

Act 3 **More Than the Justice We Expected**

Isaiah 42:1–4 (ESV)

The Lord's Chosen Servant

42 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

—

“Behold, my servant.”

Isaiah has shown us a King. Now God says, “Look at My servant.”

Kings rule. Servants stoop. But in the Messiah, the Spirit reveals both: the King who serves, the Servant who reigns.

The Father delights in the Son, the Spirit rests upon Him, and the Son carries out the Father’s will.

From that fellowship, the Servant brings justice.

Justice is central to His mission. Israel longed for it. So do we. And He will bring it—but differently than expected.

*“He will not shout,
nor raise his voice.”*

He does not prove His strength by becoming the loudest voice in the room.

He does not perform power. He possesses it. Jesus can kneel and wash His disciples’ feet without surrendering His authority.

Then Isaiah gives us two small images: a bruised reed and a dimly burning wick.

Beside words like “nations” and “justice,” they seem insignificant. But the Servant notices them.

A bruised reed is nearly broken. A dim wick barely burns. Both appear finished.

But He does not discard them.

He sees what is fragile and does not break it; what is fading and does not extinguish it.

Jesus does not confuse fragility with rebellion or woundedness with worthlessness.

Some of us need to hear that. Beneath the surface, something has been bent—loss, disappointment, failure.

The Spirit wants you to see a Servant who draws near without crushing you, who knows the difference between resistance and exhaustion.

Yet His gentleness does not ignore justice. He is tender toward the broken and opposed to what breaks them.

He tells the truth without destroying hope. Our justice becomes vengeance; our mercy, avoidance. In Jesus, holiness and compassion remain united.

Then Isaiah says:

“He will not fail nor be discouraged.”

The reed may be weak. The Servant is not.

He is gentle enough to hold the wounded... and strong enough to restore the world.

This is more than the justice Israel expected: justice that confronts evil, protects the vulnerable, and restores what has been broken.

A King we can trust. A Servant who brings justice without destroying the wounded. But what happens when His justice reaches ordinary lives?

Act 4 **More Than Comfort**

Isaiah 61:1–3 (ESV)

The Year of the Lord's Favor

61 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Once again, the passage begins with the Spirit.

The Spirit rests on the King, is placed on the Servant, and now anoints One who brings good news and restoration.

The King. The Servant. The Anointed One. Different images, same Person.

He goes to the humble, brokenhearted, captive, and grieving—people who cannot fix themselves.

The gospel is not advice for improvement. It is good news for those who cannot save themselves.

“He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted.”

The Anointed One does not stand at a distance. He draws near and tends the wound, refusing to let pain have the final word.

Then:

"Liberty to the captives."

Israel imagined national freedom. But what if external freedom leaves internal chains—sin, fear, shame, bitterness?

You can leave Egypt and still carry Egypt within you.

The Spirit reveals a Saviour who frees from the power ruling within.

Then Isaiah announces:

"The year of the LORD's favor."

Release. Restoration. New beginnings.

But also:

"The day of vengeance of our God."

God's mercy toward the oppressed requires His opposition to oppression. The good news is not that evil does not matter, but that evil will not win.

Then comes the exchange: beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, praise for heaviness.

The Messiah does not ignore the ruins. He restores.

And His people become:

"Trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD."

The bruised reed becomes strong—not self-made, but planted and sustained by God.

Grace does not merely comfort. Grace transforms.

For centuries, Israel carried these promises.

Then one Sabbath in Nazareth, Jesus stood to read.

Luke 4:16–21 (ESV)

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,¹⁸

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”²⁰

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.²¹ And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Can you imagine the silence? Jesus closes the scroll, hands it back, and sits down.

Every eye is fixed upon Him.

“Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Today.

The portrait has a face.

The shoot from Jesse's stump, the Spirit-rested King, the gentle Servant, the Anointed Liberator—is sitting before them.

For centuries, the Spirit added brushstroke after brushstroke. Now He says: Look at Him. This is the One.

God's answer to the problem beneath the problem is not an idea or system.

God's answer is a Person.

Jesus Christ.

The Spirit had prepared Israel for recognition. But they asked:

"Isn't this Joseph's son?"

They had information about Jesus. But information is not recognition.

They could identify Joseph's son and miss the Son of God.

Perhaps familiarity is more dangerous than ignorance.

We know the manger, cross, empty tomb, songs, and when to say amen. Yet we may spend decades around Jesus and reduce Him to a teacher, comfort, defender of our values, or addition to a self-directed life.

But Isaiah will not allow Jesus to remain small: King, Servant, Saviour; Holy One who confronts evil, gentle One who binds the brokenhearted.

Do you see Him—not merely know about Him, but recognize Him?

The portrait had a face. But seeing it still required opened eyes.

Did the Spirit stop revealing Christ when Jesus closed the scroll? Or could He be doing the same in us?

Act 5 **The Reveal Behind the Reveal**

For Israel, revelation unfolded over generations: craftsman, judge, king, prophet, promise, stump, servant, Saviour.

The Spirit kept adding to the portrait until Christ stood before them.

And He has not stopped. Through the Word, He opens our eyes to the Christ already revealed.

"The eyes of your hearts enlightened."

Paul prayed that for believers. You can know Christ and still need to see Him more clearly.

That has been confronting for me.

I assumed I needed stronger faith—more consistency, discipline, confidence.

But perhaps the deeper need is not bigger faith, but a clearer Christ.

Faith grows as it sees the One who is faithful.

Hope grows as it sees the incorruptible King. Trust grows as it sees the Servant who will not break the bruised reed. Obedience grows as it sees the One who rules us and gave Himself for us.

The Spirit strengthens our relationship with God by showing us Christ. Through Christ, He brings us to the Father, opens blind eyes, convicts, and forms Christ in us.

His ministry is to make Christ glorious to us.

And He does this patiently.

Sometimes I have wanted God to fix a situation while He was exposing me; wanted Jesus to support my plans while the Spirit revealed a King who could change them.

I have wanted comfort without surrender. Freedom without repentance.

And still, the Spirit has been patient: a conviction, a passage that would not let go, a prayer answered differently, a familiar truth made personal.

A little more clarity. A little more of Christ.

He has shown me that Jesus is more than I imagined and my need deeper than I understood.

Perhaps He has done that for you.

Jesus may once have been family religion; then somehow He became your Saviour.

Grace may once have been a theological word; then your sin became real and grace your only hope.

Jesus was familiar. Then you recognized Him—not fully, but more clearly.

Perhaps that is what the Spirit is doing now: opening our eyes to the Christ already revealed.

The King we trust. The Servant who will not crush us. The Saviour who frees captives. The Judge who puts things right.

You don't know what you don't know. But God has not left us in the dark.

He gave us His Word, sent His Son, and gave us His Spirit.

Why did God give us His Spirit? He gives life, convicts, sanctifies, empowers, and comforts.

But Isaiah shows us something central: He reveals Christ.

Perhaps this is why the Spirit is present when God revives His people—not because meetings grow longer, but because Christ becomes clear again.

The familiar Christ becomes astonishing. Grace becomes beautiful. The cross becomes central.

When Christ becomes clear, sin is harder to excuse, worship harder to fake, and the church remembers why it exists.

Maybe that is revival—not something we manufacture, but something that begins here:

“Holy Spirit... show me Christ.”

Show me the Christ of Scripture—not one reduced to my preferences, ambitions, or emergencies.

Show me the King. The Servant. The Saviour.

Show me the One who knows the worst about me and still calls me to come.

Show me the One who will not break the bruised reed, but loves me too much to leave my sin untouched.

Show me Christ more clearly—not so I learned something, but so I trust, love, obey, and become like Him.

For centuries, the Spirit pulled back the curtain.

A little more. A little more. A little more.

Until Jesus said:

“Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

The portrait had a face.

And the Spirit is still opening eyes, saying: “Look at Him.”

Perhaps the greatest prayer is not, “Lord, make my faith impressive,” but:

“Holy Spirit... do for me what You did for Israel. Correct my vision. Open the eyes of my heart. Show me Christ more clearly.”

Because when the Spirit shows us Christ, we understand who God is, what we need, and who He calls us to become.

Let’s pray.

Holy Spirit, we confess that we have often made Jesus smaller than He is.

We have wanted comfort without holiness, freedom without surrender, and salvation without repentance.

Open the eyes of our hearts.

Take the Word You inspired and make Christ clear to us.

Show us His wisdom, righteousness, gentleness, justice, mercy, authority, and sufficiency.

Show us the Christ we could never have imagined and the Saviour we cannot live without.

And as we see Him, teach us to trust Him, love Him, obey Him, and become like Him.

For the glory of the Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.