

**A Shoot from Jesse's Root Has Borne Fruit**  
**Sermon based on Isaiah 11:1-3a**  
**Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI**  
**Pastor Karl Walther**  
**December 6, 2006**

Gabriel told Mary regarding Jesus: *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.* Today we have gathered to prepare for his Christmas Day coming! Amen.

God's Word for our special consideration today is the first of three prophecies from Isaiah, which we will take a look at during this Advent Season, regarding the coming of the Christ. I read to you Isaiah, chapter eleven, verses one through three:

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.*

This is God's Spirit-inspired Word regarding Jesus Christ.

**Introduction: We Need a Source of Liveliness During a Dreary Time of Year**

Dear fellow Christians—for whom Christ came:

It's a dreary time of year, isn't it?

Take a look at the landscape. What was green is brown. What was brown is withering. And everything else is gray—or off-white.

It's also the middle of the week. We're in the middle of studying, and end-of-the-semester tests are coming, at that. We're in the middle of work, and end-of-the-year tasks make it more taxing than usual. Or we're retired, and life is not that much is different day-to-day.

It's a dreary time of year, but it will get drearier.

I mean: At least we have the holidays to look forward to now. After that it will be colder, grayer, and more routine, with no real holiday to break all that up.

It's even dreary on a national scale. Those of us, like you and me, who fight for righteous causes—we're getting tired of doing so, decade after decade. Those of you who remember days of national greatness – not that those were easy days! – compare these days to those days, and find us wanting nowadays.

**God's Word: Our Sin Is What Has Made This a Dreary time of Year**

So, you and I can relate to the people of Isaiah's time. Isaiah lived and prophesied to God's people in Israel some seven hundred fifty years before Jesus. Isaiah announced to his people that the ten northern tribes of Israel would soon be conquered and deported, never to return to their land. Isaiah announced that the southern tribe of Judah also sometime would be conquered and deported.

And so, the forest of family trees which was Israel – all sharing the root system, which was the Patriarch Abraham – that forest of family trees would be cut off, like so many stumps where there once was woods. Even the tallest, strongest tree – that glorious family tree which was King David's – it would be chopped to the ground, with only the stump remaining.

How dreary, do you suppose, did that make the people of Judah feel? A once great nation was no longer to be. Kings would no longer rule. Prophets would no longer

speak. Priests would no longer serve. And it was all God's judgment upon their sins. God's people had stubbornly refused to listen to him. They had stubbornly refused to obey him.

And that's parallel to our situation nationally. Why the general discontent among our populace? It's because we've idolized our entertainment, our thrills, and our happiness—and even the best of those things can never really satisfy us. Why the economic anxiety among our people? It's because we've always needed more and better things—and even the best of these blessings can never really make us happy. Why the danger and crime in our streets? It's because we've neglected or abandoned our spouses, and we've neglected or abandoned our children, and now they've turned to destruction.

It's our sin that has added dreariness to our lives. It's our stubborn refusal to listen to God, and our stubborn refusal to obey God, that has doomed us. And if we think his punishment is bad on this side of the grave, we haven't seen anything yet.

### **Part One: A Shoot from Jesse's Root Has Borne Fruit**

But it's exactly there that a gracious God steps in and reverses the damnation we could never solve!

Isaiah was privileged to announce it to his people: *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.* And isn't that the way it is? Cut down a tree in the autumn. In the spring, very often, a nice tender shoot will come up from the middle of that stump. By the summer, the thing is flowering out. It's like you can't really kill the tree. Now: only God can bring life out of death like that—in nature. And only God can bring life out of death like that—for us.

Here Israel was: a forest of dead trees, mere stumps. That's the way it remained, for three quarters of a millennium after the time of Isaiah. Then all of a sudden, one night, in the dark, in the cold, a tender little branch appeared from the stump that remained of David's family line. From his root a shoot bore fruit. And it has been producing ever since.

I mean: you know how even the littlest branches can be loaded with seeds. And from them, over time, mighty forests grow. Well, Jesus is the initial branch. He has broadcast himself throughout the world. And you are a part of the mighty forest which has grown from him.

### **Part Two: God's Seven-Fold Spirit Rests on Jesus**

What more would he be like? Well, Isaiah reports: *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.*

If you count up the descriptions of the Spirit there, there are seven of them. That's why we sometimes refer to the Holy Spirit as the sevenfold Spirit of God. That's why the "seven spirits" from whom we receive grace and peace in Revelation chapter one—they are really the one Spirit, the sevenfold Spirit of God. It's also probably why so many of the lampstands at churches have seven lights, because the lampstand at the throne of God – Revelation chapter four – has seven lamps, which represents the sevenfold Spirit of God.

Anyway, it's that Spirit – that sevenfold Spirit of God – that rested on Jesus. He did so, literally, in the form of a dove, at Jesus' baptism. It's that Spirit, the Scripture says, who led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by and to defeat the devil for us. It's that Spirit, the Scripture says, who led Jesus to Galilee to preach and to teach and to heal, to demonstrate himself to be our Savior.

It's that sevenfold Spirit who declared Jesus to be a Prophet, so that although Israel no longer had a line of prophets, we have all the revelation of God that we need: in the form of our one great Prophet, Jesus Christ. It's this Spirit who declared Jesus to be a Priest, so that although Israel's line of priests came to an abrupt and violent end, we still have all the sacrifice for sins that we need: in the form of our one great and final Priest, Jesus Christ. And it's this Spirit who declared Jesus to be a King, so that although Israel's line of kings is long concluded, we still have all the shepherd for our souls that we need: in the form of our one great King, Jesus Christ.

### **Conclusion: Jesus Is Our Source of Liveliness in a Dreary Time of Year**

Now, isn't that all the antidote to dreariness that you and I will ever need?! This brief winter may be cold and gray, but the eternal summer ahead will be bright and beautiful because of Jesus Christ! Our great country may be slumping into mediocrity, but the land in which we live forever will be better every day because of Jesus Christ!

And your studying may be ... routine. And your working ... may never change. And your retirement ... may be routine. But your roots are sunk right where God has planted you.

And your every day begins with the rainfall of blessings you experience by consulting with the *The Spirit of the LORD, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD*. And you know how that consultation with the Spirit happens. It happens when every morning you read your Bible.

And your day continues when you spread out your branches to catch the sunshine of your Savior's grace—incidentally, catching the attention of others also who need the same sunshine. And your day continues as you become a fountain of life, broadcasting the seed of Christ's gospel message to others.

And your day ends with a fervent prayer and with confidence that Christ will keep you and yours throughout the night to return you to an eternal daytime, so as to serve him in the forest of his love.

All of which, when you think about it, makes it not such a dreary time of year, after all! Amen.

Gabriel told Mary regarding Jesus: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God*. And today God's Word has prepared us for his coming once again! Amen.