



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 11, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

Advent Midweek 2

Lesson: [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 73b CW

Lesson/Devotion: [Isaiah 11:1-10](#)

CHRISTMAS TREES

THE TREE OF PROMISE

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

I'm going to start today with a little bit of a joke. It's a little bit of a longer joke. People say there are two different ideas of where everything came from. Some people say that God created everything and other people say nothing created everything. But the people that believe that nothing created everything actually make fun of the people that believe in God because they say God doesn't exist. Isn't that kind of the definition of nothing if God doesn't exist? Those people who believe nothing make fun of those people that say God does it because you can't see, taste, touch, prove, photograph God, but isn't that the definition of nothing? You can't photograph, touch, taste, feel it if it's nothing. If nothing can spontaneously make everything great, that would be a pretty amazing nothing, wouldn't it be? So you believe in something pretty amazing if you believe in this nothing that can do something amazing. It kind of sounds like what God would do. But then you ask those people who believe in nothing what happens when they die, they say nothing. So, are you then saying that they are reunited with their creator if they believe in nothing and nothing created everything that they are reunited with nothing because nothing happens—that kind of sounds like heaven; to be reunited with your Creator. That's kind of a fun joke about Creation and who God is but the reason to share that is it kind of talks about all the things that God can do and God is doing and is going to do. It speaks about Creation and how powerful God is and then heaven.

When we look at the **tree of promise** here, this prophecy speaks about so many things. It speaks about the past and what has happened, what is promised through Jesus, and what is going to happen; what the reign of the Messiah means for the people and for us and for our future. It's about how God is so great in what He can do.

The first verse is pretty fascinating and very important. ***A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse...*** You read over that and you could go over it real quick—stump. What is a stump? That's when you cut down a tree, chop it down. Like we talked about last week, we've seen a lot of trees come down in the last few years. If there's a wind storm, a tree falls down on the playground and you come out a few days later, that tree is gone, but what is left? It's a stump. Why was there a stump? Why is there a stump of Jesse that is talked about? It is rebellion. That's what we talked about last week, that tree of rebellion. Not only is it the rebellion of the people then because the people of Israel had rebelled. God had established His Kingdom. We heard about it in Samuel, how He had Saul, and Saul even was not a great king. God protected him. And then David was a good king. There were a few good kings, but king after king and people after people of the people of Israel, they went away from God. They went after other gods. They didn't believe Him. They trusted other idols. And that tree, that beautiful line of David and the Kingdom of Israel, was chopped down. We know that the Babylonians and the Assyrians came over and they captured the Israelites. They took them into exile and finally destroyed the temple. These are all things that Isaiah is talking about. He is going to experience them. And he is prophesying about the downfalls. This is what happens. This beautiful promise and all the things that God had given the Israelites, they lost it because of their sin. So in the future, people are going to be looking at the line of David, the kings of Israel, the nation of Israel, and it looks like a stump. It's been cut off. It's not worth looking at. What can come out of that? It's kind of like in the joke. What can God do if there is nothing as creation? God can do great things, can't He?

It's the same thing when we look at our lives and our rebellion and how we go away from God, how we struggle with God. We wonder "Where are you God? What are you doing? It often looks like there is a stump. You haven't done anything, God. You left us. You don't care about us." We wonder, "Where are you?" Some of that is our fault because of our sin and our rebellion.

But that's where **the tree of promise** comes in—the promise of what will come from that stump of Jesse. God can take what is dead and make it alive. We know that in our own hearts. We know that through baptism. We know that through all of us, every person who is sinfully dead by faith. What does God do? He makes us all alive through faith. This is what God did to the stump of Jesse. He says, ***"...from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—³and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.*** This is a King that is so much better than any of those earthly kings. This is that promised Messiah.

We know that the people were searching for Him and this is what Jesus came to do. Jesus came to be that perfect King, for you and for me. And this came out of a stump. At that time, Bethlehem, when Jesus was born, was nothing. And to think of how Jesus was born? He was born of a virgin, born in a way where there shouldn't have been the ability to have life—the creation of life—but instead, God created life. So we see what God works. God continues to work miracles.

What would happen then? Notice the picture of what comes is a picture of peace. All these things that shouldn't exist together—the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the goat, the calf and the lion, a child playing near a cobra's den, these things that in our world we do not see and you'd be fearful if you saw these things. You'd worry for the one because the one would be devoured.

There are two pictures of this that we look at. Is this something we are going to see on earth? I think in some ways it's the picture of what the peace of God does. It's what the peace of the Messiah brings. The promised Messiah brings a peace that far outweighs anything that we could imagine. He brings forgiveness and peace to you and to me now. The working of our Lord is so much better than we could imagine. But I do believe in the end this is what heaven is going to look like. Where there is no more fear of death and danger. Everything will be finally in harmony. This is what our Messiah comes to do.

We can struggle with these pictures of what God has done, what God is doing, what God will do because so often in our lives, in our lives of sin and struggle and pain, we see stumps. But God takes that stump of Jesse and brings out your Savior, the Messiah—a lowly child who is the Savior of the world. He brings Him and is born of a virgin for you and for me and shows that He works miracles so that you know that the miracle of salvation can be worked in your heart and that peace is yours ahead. You have that peace and forgiveness now. That is the promise you know is true. But we are waiting for that promise to be fulfilled, just as the people were waiting for this promise to be fulfilled—the promise of heaven.

We've seen what rebellion does and how the Lord takes it away by sending the Savior, the Messiah. We see the promise ahead. We'll focus more on that next week as we see the **tree of life**—how everything is restored. So take joy in the fact that things aren't always how they appear—that God can work great things out of things that seem dead. He can bring life out of a stump. He can bring faith and salvation into you and me, who are by nature spiritually dead. But you have that promise of a Savior and the forgiveness of sins through the promised Messiah. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.