



READ: Isaiah 11:1-12 (ESV)

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 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. 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, 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. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

The 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. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They 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.

In 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. In 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. He 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.

ENTER THE STORY:

On the very first day of Advent, we began our journey at the stump of Jesse's Tree, and today we return to it. But this time, we gain additional insight. We've already read Isaiah's prophecy about the righteous branch from Jesse's stump and we learned what type of ruler he will be. But now we get a glimpse into what this new kingdom will be like...and if we're honest, it not only seems improbable, but altogether impossible.

Wolves dwelling with lambs? Cows and bears grazing together? Lions eating straw? Children playing with poisonous snakes? Are we to assume these descriptions are literal, or just literary devices used to paint a picture? It's an interesting question for sure, and one we aren't likely to completely answer today, but it all stems from one verse buried in the middle of the passage. *"They 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."*

Whether we know it or not...this is the KEY to unlocking this passage.

In Isaiah chapter 9, we learned that when Jesus comes to usher in a new kingdom, there will be peace. In fact Isaiah 9:7 says, *"Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end."* When we connect that to this idea that *"the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD,"* we see that the changes Jesus' presence brings to this new kingdom extend to all of creation...possibly even the animals.

Paul reinforces this idea of creation being made new again in *Romans 8:19-22b*, *"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."*

- Death and suffering, even in the animal realm, are symptoms of a sin-soaked creation, but Isaiah 11 gives us hope and points us to a future where suffering will be no more, and peace will rule.

• *It is difficult to imagine a future like this isn't it? Even impossible?*

- There's that word again...*impossible*. It hangs out there at the end of that sentence like a challenge for God, yet we know this wouldn't be difficult for the one who spoke everything into existence. He already created a world like this in the garden, and like a bookend to the story...God's Word closes in Revelation with a brilliant vision of all things restored.

• *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son." (Revelation 21:1-7)*
• *(For a fuller view of this kingdom, go back and read ALL of Revelation 21-22).*

• *Can you see it? Can you imagine a world where everything is made right again?*

- In this new kingdom where Jesus, the Root of Jesse, reigns, all of this improbability becomes not just probable but actual. Isaiah's prophecy is not make believe, and it's not a fairy tale. This is what we have to look forward to!
- PRAISE GOD!!

■ **PRAY:** *Jesus, we long for your kingdom. We long for you to make all the wrongs right, and to call to an end all of the death and suffering that causes our hearts such pain. Come quickly, Lord. Amen.*