

## The King and the Root of Jesse

Isaiah 11.1–12.6

### *Sermon*

This a very sig day in the life of our cong. As many know, after conc of service: Annual Cong Mtng. Great time to review past year. Many reports given from various mins & leaders. Ill of prepping my report. But not just looking back, also looking ahead. In that light 2 critical matters cong will consider: officers & budget. Might be accurate to say that nothing better reflects where a ch is & nothing more affects where a ch is going than the leaders it chooses & the way it spends its money. Hope all of you who are members can stay for this very imp mtg.

No accident that Prov has us where we are in our series on The K & the City. Isa 11 (p. 467). I did not intentionally choose last wk's & this wk's txt on the basis of Annual Mtng. To be brutally honest, I hadn't even considered imps of last wk's txt for this wk's Annual Mtng until Thurs afternoon as I walked through the park. Yet now it seems so obvious I have to wonder how I missed it. Apparently the Sp didn't want me to make app to our ch until then.

One way to summarize **last wk's serm**: how you see past shapes how you see fut. Might remember tried to draw a matrix w two axes: x-axis future (cyclical vs. linear), y-axis success (high vs. low). Results in four attitudes/mindsets, three reflected in txt. Assyria: **presumptuous**. In G's sov plan Assyria would bring great destruction to Judah, they'd be an instr in his hand to effect judgment. But pride kept them from recog G's hand in their success. Judah: tempted to **despair**. No outward success, no hope of anything better. But not how Judah always thought (cp. 9.10): believed fut was up to them, in their hands. Ergo **defiant**, bootstrap thinking, aggressive, brassy. Fourth quadrant, not spec id'ed in txt: **protective**. Had lots of success in past, but view fut as threat to what you've accomplished.

Id'ed last wk fund prob w all four approaches to life: each revolves around axis of my own work, puts me at center, at root of each is pride. What G has been addressing in this whole sec. Chs. 7–12 the Book of Imm, challenge to Judah to trust him, to stop relying on past success or despairing over past failures, to turn from defiantly making our own way or hiding in a self-protective shell—in short, to stop centering life on ourselves & center life around Imm. But what would that look like? What would it look like if Imm/M were axis around which life revolved? That's what this txt is all about. [Read.]

Big question every bib scholar grapples w: when? Has this already taken place? Is it entirely future? Or is some of this happening right now? What we all want to do is plug the whole psg into one of category: either past, pres, or fut. Take 11.6–9 as ex. Some: “clearly entirely fut bc animals do not now act like this.” True, but some must be past (e.g., rescue from exile). Others: “on that basis must be fig of peace that comes through X, i.e., a ref to ch.” True, but can't be entirely past bc earth not yet *filled w knowledge of L* (9).

Better q to start off w: who? Who is this Ruler that will come? What is he like? How will we recog him when he comes? That's the q Isa addresses directly in ch. 11. Offers four **chars** of **this coming K**.

- Dependent (2–3a). Prompted to action by Sp of G. *wis* & *und*: how he governs. *counsel* & *might*: decide & act on right course of action. *know* & *fear*: knows G & therefore seeks to please him.
- Just (3b–5). Goes beyond human judges: “infinite justice demands infinite knowledge.” *sash*: strip away all else & integrity remains.
- Benevolent/shalomic (6–9). Cessation of hostilities, life as should be.
- Inclusive (10–16). Not just blessing to Isr/Judah/Jeru: *nats* (10). An exod-like gathering (11).

Such a leader Judah has never known. Many like contemp K Ahaz: trying to be savvy poli ruler, failed to trust word of 1TG. Even best like

D & Sol seriously deficient morally. Who could live up to this standard?

**Hint:** *stump of Jesse* (1). Not D but D's father. Why? Bc coming K not just another king in Davidic line, but another David—t&g David. More, coming K not just *branch* off Jesse's line (1) but actually the *root* (10): not just climax of kingly line, but seed of it too! How could this be? Only if K somehow precedes Jesse & follows him, if 1st & last.

& friends such a K has come! When you open 2nd half of Xian B, 1st thing you see: **J** stems from D's line. & when you read his life, it's as if every pg recounts his dependence, justice, benevolence, inclusiveness. Baptism ref to Sp (Mt 3. #1). Ill of reading Mt 22 this wk: parable of king & guests (#4), paying taxes (#2), qs by Sads/Phars (#3—silenced hypocrites). Gos testify that K Isa predicted has come & his name is J.

But his silencing relig leaders didn't end hostility, in fact fanned them into even greater flame that led to his own crucifixion. Doesn't at all seem to fit what Isa predicted. But again seeds are here (12.1): any thoughtful reader of Heb B would have recog that for G's anger to turn away, a sacr must be made. Isa doesn't tell us yet what that sacr will be, but before his book ends he will: coming K/this M/this J would be One to turn away G's wrath. In order to bring salv to his peo, he would have to die. Only way presumptuous peo/despairing/defiant/protective can find G to be their salv. We have so centered our lives on ourselves that we have no hope of rescuing ourselves. We can't even break axis & replace it w G's rule bc we turn our seeming spir into a weapon of our pride. We can't do it. But where we have failed, J has succeeded. Notice anything about these four chars of J? Correspond to four ways we center lives on ourselves: **presumptuous > dependent** (not presuming on his own ability); **despair > just** (unconcerned about own status, working for others); **defiant > benevolent** (not trying to prove his worth but to bring peace); **protective > inclusive** (not defending turf but spreading joy). Where we have failed, J has succeeded & he succeeded for us, in our place.

& tho we should face G's anger for our pride, we find that it has turned away—bc J was treated as if he were guilty of our presumptuousness, despair, defiance, protectiveness. What cross is all about: not a flattering pic of us, shows exactly what our sin deserves. But bc J took what we deserve, we call out even as Isa predicted: *I will praise you, L. Tho you were angry w me, your anger has turned away & you have comforted me. Surely You are my salv; I will trust & not be afraid. The L, the L himself, is my strength & my song; You have become my salv* (12.1–2)!

& that **transformation** that begins when we turn from our old ways & rely fully on J **continues** to shape the way we live. Remember how you see past shapes how you see fut. If expectation for fut revolves around my past success, for good or for bad, I'm destined for trouble. But once we see that J the Serv K really is axis around which life revolves, he shapes way we see fut. Not a matter of making J K but of recog J is K, not of breaking axis & making J axis, but of submitting to reality that he is axis around which everything revolves. & when we do, we find hope.

Powerfully ill'd in our ch history. When you look back, what do you see? Might look back & see **signs of life** (new members, non-Xians being reached: temptation to be presumptuous about fut. Maybe look back & see **decades of challenge**, discouragement, little movement: temptation to despair. Or might look back & see **troublesome times but w new leadership/faces** we'll fix things: temptation to bootstrap mentality, defiance. Perhaps look back & see **glory days** (Gano, Cone, Haldeman): temptation to be protective about fut, “guardians of past glory.” Friends, all of these are sinful & wrong, bc all center on us.

What should we see when we look back? Not ourselves, not peo, not Gano, Cone, Haldeman, but a K intent on making a name for himself. **K upon whom the Sp rested** & who has sent that Sp to rest on broken peo like us—& when we see signs of life in our cong we know it is by his Sp & his Sp alone that it's happening. What should we see when we

look back? A **K who defends the oppressed & grants perfect justice**—& when we're tempted to be discouraged by slow progress or little fruit, we can rest in our trustworthy K who will always do what is right, even if his timetable is not our own. What should we see when we look back? A **K who brings shalom** to his peo, who makes hostilities cease & will renew all things so that everything will be as it should—& when we think it's all up to us & we're tempted to brassy defiance, we see him & relax. He's got it all under control. What should we see when we look back? A **K who expands his borders** & welcomes those who don't know him to himself & to his peo—& so when we look back & see the glory days, we anticipate that the Sp who was at work in Gano, Cone, Haldeman is the same Sp at work in us today, making a name for himself, bringing those far off to J. Friends, what should we see when we look back? The Serv K at work.

If we see the past that way, it will shape how we see the fut. What will 2015 have in store? No clue. Can't be presumptuous: our ch may not even survive 2015. Mustn't despair: our Shep never fails. Can't be defiant: we're not sov, G is. Mustn't be protective: any success is G's not ours. What will 2015 have in store? Whatever the Serv K wants. & let me assure you—whatever that is, it's better than we could've imagined.