

BIBLE STUDY
December 2, 2019

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 11: 1-10

Matthew 3: 1-12

Romans 15: 4-9

1. Isaiah 11: 1-10

- A prophecy about the coming of an ideal King of Israel.
- 1: stump suggests the failure of the historical kings of Israel. The sprout suggests a need for new life going right back to the source, which is Jesse, the father of David. A bud shall blossom=new life, new beginning
- 2: Spirit of the Lord=ruah: breath of God, wind at creation, so a new creation. The spirit rested upon the Lord's servant in Is 42; Jesus at his baptism; the apostles on Pentecost.
- 2: Source of the traditional gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, strength (fortitude), fear of the Lord, and (piety). The Greek version of the Bible (Septuagint (Greek bible) and Vulgate (Latin Bible) used piety in the first instance of fear of the Lord which made for seven gifts.
- 3b-5: ideal qualities of the king. How we would desire these qualities in a ruler! He will not judge by appearance or hearsay. He will judge the poor with justice. He will be fair to the afflicted. He will be stern and harsh with wrongdoers. He will be known for his justice and faithfulness.
- 7-9: the vision of the Peaceable Kingdom. It recalls the original harmony of the Garden of Paradise. It is a powerful sign of the universal peace and justice to be ushered in by the ideal King. Natural enemies become friends: calf and lion; cow and bear; lion and ox; a little child and a baby will be in no danger.
- 9: There will be no harm or destruction because all will follow the knowledge of the Lord.
- 10: The Davidic kingship will be a signal, a sign to the nations of the right way to order their lives according to the law of the Lord. All nations of the world will search for him. The Lord will receive glory because of the King's righteousness.

2. Matthew 3: 1-12

- John the Baptist was an important religious figure. His message was of conversion before the coming judgment which is very soon. There is urgency to the call of conversion.
- He was associated with the "voice crying out in the desert" that Isaiah 40 spoke of.
- John's dress reminds us of the prophet Elijah who was to return before the coming of the Messiah. John clearly has the role of the one who prepares the people for coming of the Messiah.

- John was very popular. People came from all over to hear him and be baptized. Even Jesus came to hear him preach and be baptized. Acts of the Apostles gives us examples of how John's movement lasted. However, there is care to distinguish John from Jesus and to show that Jesus was superior to John.
- There were many purification rites in Judaism using water. John's was unique in that it was not only for ritual purity but also demanded a change of life, conversion, and repentance.
- Matthew introduces the Pharisees and Sadducees who will become the antagonists of Jesus. Pharisees observed the Law of Moses strictly with special emphasis on diet, ritual purity, and observance of the Sabbath. Sadducees were an elite priestly class who only held the first five books of the Bible and interpreted them literally. They rejected a whole body of interpretation and application of the Bible. They did not believe in the resurrection because it was not contained in the Torah.
- John demanded that the Pharisees and Sadducees give evidence of the conversion and change of heart by their deeds. They should not presume privilege because of their blood relationship to Abraham and the patriarchs.
- The baptism of John demands a change of behavior in order for it to be effective and save one from judgement.
- John's baptism is different from Jesus' because Jesus is greater than John. Jesus will baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit (it will derive its transforming power from the saving death and resurrection of Jesus).
- Judgement involves separation of good from evil just as wheat from chaff, trees that bear good fruit and those that bear bad fruit.

3. **Romans 15: 4-9**

- Paul is urging that members of the church not judge one another or feel superior to others because their beliefs are more progressive or enlightened. The stronger members of the community should have patience and special concern for the weaker members. A divisive issue in Paul's time was whether a Christian could eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Some said since the idols were false, then the sacrificed meat had no significance. Others said that to eat the meat was participating in the unlawful sacrifice. Paul says that if we are giving scandal to a brother or sister by eating such meat, then we should refrain from doing so out of love. We should only do what builds up and encourages another. We should not try to only please ourselves but think of others first.
- In verse 3: Paul quotes Psalm 69:10 to support the action of Jesus. In verse 4: Paul affirms that the Old Testament has many good and inspiring teachings for our endurance and encouragement even though we do not live by the Law of Moses.
- 5: A prayer that God will give us the grace to think in harmony with one another as did Jesus. Not uniformity of thought but respectful and careful listening to one another.

- 6. We desire unity so that we can offer God praise and glory with one voice.
- 7: The mission of the church is to bring all people both Jew and Gentile together for the glory of God and the recognition of Jesus as Son of God. Therefore, welcome everyone Just as Christ as welcomed us.
- 8-9: Just as Christ reached out to both Jew (circumcised) and Gentile (uncircumcised) so should we welcome and embrace everyone.