

# Isaiah 10,11

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] We're reading Narnia to Noah. We've just finished The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe. And you know that story, don't you, for many of us. The four Pevensie children have travelled! to a home outside London during the war, where it's safer. And in that home they find a large wardrobe. And here is how C.S. Lewis describes the scene of the novel. Looking into the inside of the cupboard, she saw several coats hanging out. Mostly long fur coats. There is nothing Lucy liked so much as the smell and feel of fur. She immediately stepped into the wardrobe.

This must be an enormous wardrobe, thought Lucy. Going still further in, she pushed the soft folds of the coats by to make room for her. And she noticed that there was something crunching under her feet. Stooping down to feel it with her hand, she felt something soft and powdery and extremely cold.

This is very queer, she said, and went on a step or two further. Something cold and soft was falling on her. A moment later she found that she was standing in the middle of a wood at night time, with snow at her feet and snowflakes falling through the air. She began to walk forward, crunch, crunch over the snow, and through the snow towards the light. And in about ten minutes she reached it and found that it was a lamp post. She stood looking at it, wondering why there was a lamp post in the middle of a wood, and wondering what to do next. She heard the pitter patter of feet coming toward her. Soon after that a very strange person stepped out from among the trees into the light of the lamp post. It was of course at that moment as a fawn named, namely Mr. Tumnus, that Lucy realized she was not in England anymore. But she'd entered the magical world of Narnia.

There are a few scenes in literature as magical as that, are they? As that entrance by Lucy through the wardrobe into that enchanting world of Narnia. Why does that resonate with so many of us? Why does it resonate with millions of readers? And if you're not a reader maybe you saw the film. Is it that in some way all of us have imagined ourselves to be a Lucy? Maybe not in a world like Narnia, but definitely different from the world that we're in now. Indeed we don't just dream and imagine about a different world, but we dream and imagine about a better world, don't we?

[ 2 : 48 ] There is this deep longing inside every single one of us, and it is expressed in various ways. You could say that whatever your politics are. Whether you are adamantly part of the Remain group, or you are furiously part of the Brexit group. There is a desire, isn't there, in both of those, whether it is Remain or Brexit, for a better world. Behind all the protests and all the arguments that take place is a desire for a better world. You move from the political sphere to the secret loins of our hearts. And the desire is still there, isn't it? You think about the struggles in your life. The financial struggles. The health concerns. The employment pressures. The relationship angst. And some of you, and some of us at some stage, will say, if only my life were different.

If only this world was different. And our minds start to dream, don't they, of a vision of a better world. Well, here in Isaiah 11, the prophet provides such a vision, doesn't he? And if Narnia was a complete contrast for Lucy to the war-torn world of England that she was used to, the vision of a better world that Isaiah presents is even more of a contrast to the people of Judah at that time. So you remember, we've been going through the early chapters of Isaiah, and we've seen for Judah, judgment is coming, that is certain. It is coming from God, from forsaking God. But the people, instead of trusting God, have forsaken him. Rather than trusting in him, they've forsaken Judah. Judah has failed. And its kings have decided not to trust in the Lord God Almighty, the Lord of hosts, but to trust in the superpower of Assyria, against the threat of neighbouring nations.

And Isaiah announces that God is not only going to bring judgment upon Judah through Assyria, but then, as we saw in chapter 10, he's going to bring his wrath to bear against Assyria as well.

[ 5 : 04 ] And so at the end of chapter 10, right before, right at the end of that section, can you see verse 33 and 34 of chapter 10? Behold, the Lord God of hosts will lock the bows with terrifying power.

The great in height, they'll be hewn down. The lofty will be brought low. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by his majestic one.

God is going to cut down. God is going to cut down the size of the king of Assyria. And by implication, all those who have aligned themselves with Assyria, which would actually include Judah. But those who thought themselves high and mighty, like the cedars, the tall trees of Lebanon, they'll be cut down to stumps.

And from the perspective of the people of Judah, it really couldn't have gone much worse. But out of the darkness, Isaiah wants to point again to the light, which is what he does here in chapter 11. Isaiah is going to point to the people, to a world of rest, ruled by a righteous king. To a world of rest, a world of peace, ruled by a righteous king.

[ 6 : 20 ] And I want to suggest to you, what you find in Isaiah 11 is what everyone is looking for. It's what you are looking for. Whether you realise it or not. It's what your Muslim neighbours, it's what your Hindu friends, it's what your non-religious colleagues are looking for.

So first of all, let's see the world of peace. Isaiah points to the world of peace. Look at verse 6 of Isaiah 11. Verse 6 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 will lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like ox. The nursing child shall play over the hold of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adders down.

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 cleverly see. Now this passage, it's got to ring bells for you, isn't it?

If you know your Bible at all, it certainly points to a return to the Garden of Eden prior to the fall. But as you look at the images, they are startling, although you can have great fun with these images.

[ 7 : 38 ] You've got this play of the wolf and the lamb. The prey gives hospitality to the predator. It's like the lamb says, oh, come in, Mr. Wolf, take a seat, what can I get you for dinner?

It's like the wolf in the story of the three pigs, he says, I will huff and I will puff and I will blow your house down. Oh, please come in, Mr. Wolf, what can we get you for your tea? In the world we live in, it is bizarre, it is impossible.

Padres was a Roman writer at the time of Christ who wrote fables in the tradition of Aesop. And one of his fables, probably the most famous one, is of a wolf who's standing upstream in a river who accuses a lamb who is downstream of muddying the waters.

And all of which leads to the wolf seizing the lamb and killing it. Now that is what you'd expect, isn't it? The wolf and the lamb, they're not friends. The wolf, the predator, kills the prey.

But here Isaiah says, there is a world in which a lamb will offer hospitality to the wolf. He'll say, come back to mine for lunch. And Isaiah goes on with these animal analogies.

[ 8 : 52 ] And we realize that this is not just an upgraded version of our world. This is not iPhone 6 when you've been used to iPhone 4S for the last three years or something like that.

No, this is radically different. It's not an upgrade. And some of you may be thinking, well, no offense, Paul, but when I think of a new world, of a better world, my mind doesn't exactly run to animals offering hospitality to each other.

I want something much bigger. But I grant that. So let me take you to the key picture of the passage. Can you see it? It's right in the middle. It's deliberately right in the middle.

In verse 8, you have this infant, this young child playing at the hole of a cobra. This tiny tot playing with the viper.

And the reason that is significant is because Isaiah is picking up on the theme that is back in Genesis 3. We read that in the Garden of Eden, the devil comes in the form of a serpent, of a snake.

[ 9 : 56 ] and he deceives Adam and Eve to rebel against God and as a result, God's curse falls on Adam and Eve and on the serpent. And the world has been under the curse of God ever since.

And you and I, by nature, are under that curse. We are under the stern wrath and judgment of God because of our rebellion against Him. so that everything in your life and my life, everything in this world is not as it's meant to be.

And that can be traced back to the forehole. Here is the fundamental problem that we deal with in this world. But Isaiah says, on that day, the infant will play without fear near the cobra's hole. And the young child will treat the viper like a plaything. He says, this is the peaceful kingdom. It's a world of peace.

And it's a world of peace because the curse from the fall has been removed. All the effects of the fall are now gone in this image right there 11. All the consequences of sin have been removed. [11:06] They've been sucked out of the world on that day. That everything you wish was different about your life right now will be different on that day. And most importantly, God's judgment and wrath which we fully deserve will be no more.

And the effects will not just be in your life and in my life. Isaiah says they will be worldwide. They will be cosmic. You see, salvation is not just about you and my personal relationship with the Lord. God is the cosmic God. And salvation is cosmic. Because it says, doesn't it, the whole earth, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

It's a world of peace because it's a world of peace with God. So here's my first point. Here's a world of peace. But secondly, we see that it is a world of peace that is inhabited by a people at rest. It is a world of peace that is inhabited by a people at rest. Look at verses 10 to 13. In that day, the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal, as a banner, is a much better translation, as a rallying point for the peoples.

[12:25] 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 China, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

He will raise a signal, a banner for the nations, and will assemble the banished people of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

And the jealousy of Ephraim will be cast, and those who harass Judah will be cut off, and Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. Isaiah looks to the future, the future day, and he says God is going to rescue his people.

Can you see that verse 11 for a second time? And if you're unclear over what was the first time when God rescued his people, it's there in verse 16. the Lord will utterly destroy the town of the sea of Egypt, isn't it beautiful language, and will wave his hand over the river with his scorching breath, and strike it into seven channels, and he will lead the people across in sandals.

It's got to be a giveaway, isn't it? And there will be a highway for Assyria, for the remnant and the remains of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt. There's going to be a reversal of the curse.

[13:52] But there's also going to be another exodus. There'll be another Eden, and there'll be another exodus. There'll be another deliverance, just as God promised to bring the people to the promised land, the first land, so now he's going to deliver them, or a remnant of them to return to the promised land.

There's going to be a reversal of the curse of the exile. But this time, the deliverance is not going to be from Egypt, it's not going to be from one part of the world, it's going to be a wider exodus, isn't it? It's going to be a worldwide dispersion. So with the nations and places that he mentions, Isaiah covers, doesn't he, the four points of the compass. From north, from south, from east, from west, that's where those nations are from, to indicate that God is going to gather his people from the four corners of the earth, verse 12, and wherever they've been scattered.

But once he's gathered them, look at verse 13, these nations are not going to turn the same as when they left. That is, they departed and strife with each other, but now they are at peace.

The nations, all jealousy and hostility will vanish because God's people will be at peace with each other. It's a wonderful, wonderful picture picture that the fruit of peace with God is peace with each other.

[15:20] We know that in a small little way in the church life, the fruit of peace with God is peace with each other. But in a much greater way, we look forward to that.

So it is a world of peace inhabited by a people at rest. And the question does arise, who are these people that Isaiah is writing of? And interestingly we see at the beginning of this section that these people at rest are not restricted to one or two nations.

But we get verse 10, In that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner, as a signal for the peoples, for the nations. And of him the nations will inquire, they will come to him and his resting place will be glorious.

Do you see how extensive this is? Along with a remnant, with a part of ethnic Israel, there will be the nations. But it will be just as the book of Revelation promises that every tribe and every tongue and every people and every nation will be there.

And he says there will be no strife. There will be no ethnic animosities anymore. On a personal level, there will be no gossip. There will be no cold shouldering.

[16:36] There will be no animosity. There will be no jealousy. There will be no inferiority complexes. Can you imagine that? Think of how much of the stress and anxiety of your life is caused by relationship tensions.

Hurt that is caused by careless words. Spiteful words. Or having been ignored or maligned or misunderstood or taken for granted.

and in all our lives, it's a huge amount of stress to deal with that, to navigate that. That in fact is, particularly in ministers, there's a kind of theory at the moment that actually it's overwork kind of causes ministers to break down.

Actually, I don't think that is true. I think it is the stress of broken relationships that causes that. God's for all the angst that we have with people.

One day, I say, it will be God. It will be God. We're going to get on famously. We'll send emails to each other and we'll perfectly understand those emails.

[17:49] I pray there will be no email in the new creation. But we will get on famously. It will be a world of peace inhabited by a people at rest.

And I don't know about you, that sounds pretty good to me. I mean, who wouldn't really want a world like that? And yet some people will say today, Eucharist is all pie in the sky, it's all make-believe.

In 1516, Sir Thomas More wrote a book called Utopia. I have not read it, but I know an illustration about it. And it was in essence a critique of England at the time.

500 years later, we still use the term, not we? And then he coined for his title, Utopia. And the way that we commonly use the word is to refer to a perfect place where everything is the way it should be all the time.

But Sir Thomas More actually intended it as a pun. So sometimes in the book he would spell it with the prefix, EU. Because in Greek that means good, that means it was a good place.

[19:02] But at other times, Thomas More would spell it utopia, OU, with the prefix OU, which in Greek means no. Or not meaning. Not a place.

And his point was that there is no such perfect place. But Isaiah says there is a day coming, one day, such a perfect place, such a world of peace inhabited by a people at rest, that it is coming. But it all depends on one person. One person. So third point, this is a world of peace because it is inhabited by people at rest and it is ruled by a righteous king.

It is ruled by a righteous king. Let's go back to the start of the chapter. Verse 1. Now do you remember, at the end of verse 34 there is a massive great tree that has been cut down.

So there is a stump in the middle of the field. Get the picture. There is a massive great tree stump. And the tree has been cut down. And then in verse 1 there shall come forth a shoot.

[20:12] A shoot from the stump of Jesse. And a branch, a little tiny branch from his roots shall bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. See that? It's a shoot.

It's a branch. Verse 2. It's a hem. 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 will 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.

With the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. So we saw earlier at the end of chapter 10 it ends with a judgment. Judgment on these proud kings.

On the high and mighty. The proud kings of Israel. God chops them down like trees. But here at the beginning of chapter 11 I told them there's a tiny shoot that comes up from the stump of Jesse. And from the roots of that shoot a branch will come that will bear fruit.

[ 21 : 13 ] And as we've seen Isaiah do several times again we have in the midst of darkness a glimmer of hope. And what is interesting here is that the shoot comes from the stump of Jesse.

The shoot comes from the stump of Jesse. You say it was Jesse. Well Jesse was the father of King David. And so the question, the obvious question is why does Isaiah, the shoot come from the stump of David?

In the Old Testament and the New Testament David was far more important than Jesse. And we usually make the connection don't we between the coming king, King David's greater son and King David.

Why does Isaiah not say there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of David? Well because he wants his audience to understand, he wants his readers to understand that this is not just another king in the line of David.

There are quite a few kings mentioned in the Old Testament that were sons of David, they were of David's lineage. They were from David. Some did quite well, to put it mildly, some did not so well, some were awful.

[ 22 : 26 ] But Isaiah's point is that another David is coming. Another David is coming. In fact, a greater David is coming from the stump of Jesse, that the golden king of the past was just a shadow of the true God that was still to come.

And look at how this greater David is described in verses 2 and 3. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him permanently. It will never depart from him. And it will give to him these gifts.

Wisdom. Well what is wisdom? It is the capacity to have the right judgment in all things. What is understanding? Someone with understanding has the ability to see to the heart of the issue.

They will be able to devise the right course of action. They will be able to achieve it perfectly. He will have knowledge. That's not just head knowledge but the enjoyment of a personal intimate relationship with a person and in this context with God.

And fear. This person will have fear. They will live life in complete conformity to the will of God. In fact, we're told, aren't we, this person will delight, verse 3, as delight will be the fear of God.

[ 23 : 34 ] And these endowments, they will just come and go. The spirit of the Lord is upon him all the time, so he is this all the time. And then Isaiah teases it out, doesn't he, by saying he will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide what he hears with his ears.

And you think to yourself, what kind of judge is that? Do I really want a judge who's not going to use his eyes and his ears when he's considering the evidence? Isn't that a bit dodgy?

But you see, this judge, this judge doesn't have to use his eyes or his ears because he already knows all the evidence. Isaiah seems becoming awfully close, doesn't he?

If not up to attributing deity to this righteous king. Because in the end, there is only one who can judge, isn't that? And it is only God can judge.

Only God can judge without seeing the case. And because this righteous king does know all the evidence, we are told he judges all cases, especially for the needy and poor, with justice and righteousness.

[ 24 : 39 ] And part of the injustice of Judah at that time involved the rich being able to put off the judges in order to avoid justice. And they got away with everything. They could pay off the judges. But Isaiah says there is a judge who will not be paid off.

There is a righteous king who will come to judge with perfect equity for everyone. And his rule will not simply be by his word. Sorry, his rule will simply be by his word.

The rod of his mouth will be no physical weapons. They will be needed because the power of his word will be the weapon. And you see gradually through these first 11 chapters of Isaiah, Isaiah has been leaking clues, hasn't he, about somebody who is going to come and fix this world.

chapter 7 he is described as a child born to a virgin called Emmanuel. He is God with us. In chapter 9 I told him of a light that is coming into the deep darkness.

I told him of a son that is born for us who is a wonderful counsellor, who is mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace. And now we see this one who is coming, this righteous king, who Isaiah says is the greater David, is endowed with divine ability.

[ 25 : 48 ] that here is one who can and will deliver us to a world of peace inhabited by a people of rest. And Isaiah isn't finished yet, look at his description in verse 10 and in that day the root of Jesse, the root of Jesse who shall stand as a signal for the peoples of him shall the nations inquire and his resting place will be glorious.

Now can you see the difference between verse 1 and verse 10? what's he described of in verse 1? Can you see it?

What is he in verse 1 of Jesse? He's the shoot. Verse 10, what is he? He's the root. How on earth does that work? He is saying, and this is so wonderful isn't it, that the one who will come from Jesse is the one from whom Jesse came.

Can you get that? Write that down. The one who will come from Jesse is the one from whom Jesse came. The one who entered into creation was the one by whom all of creation was made.

The word became flesh. And Isaiah says this root of Jesse will now stand as a banner to the nations and the nations will run to it.

[ 27 : 18 ] But this righteous king will be a gathering place. He'll be a place of rest, a promised land, a sanctuary. There will literally be glory for those who come.

There is utopia. There is EU-topia. There is a good place. There is a world of peace, but it depends upon a person. And it is Jesus, if you've not guessed it.

Jesus, who when he was told by his disciples, Philip and Andrew came to him, they said there are some Greeks that want to see you. Some Greeks, they are not Jews. Well, they are people from the Gentiles.

They are Gentiles who want to see you, Jesus. And Jesus says these words, he says, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men, all people to myself.

And we read that, and maybe it's not the clearest thing in our minds, what Jesus is talking about.

And it wouldn't have been the clearest thing in the minds of his audience. Because immediately after having quoted Jesus, John writes this, Jesus said this to show the kind of death that he's going to die.

[ 28 : 23 ] I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. I will be a signal for the peoples. I'll be a banner for the peoples. And suddenly it comes together.

But as I was speaking of a world of peace inhabited by a people of rest, ruled by a sovereign king, and the sovereign king is the crucified one. And the nations come, we come this morning to the one lifted up, we come to the banner, we come to the signal over the nations.

And you say, who would rally to a crucified person on a cross? And the answer is those who come to Jesus. And for any of us to enter that world of peace which we all desire, we need a champion.

We need a king who will crush the serpent. We need a king who will defeat sin and death that entered into this world of the fallen. You and I cannot do it. You cannot. And you cannot create your perfect world.

You cannot and God will not let you do it. And you and I are under the judgment ourselves and we cannot fix the problem. We need someone to come in who is not under the judgment.

[ 29 : 37 ] God. And this king comes into this world of sin and he turns the weapons of the devil on himself. Death itself and in his own death he takes the wrath and the judgment of God that was ours to take.

you see Isaiah wants you to know that there was a world of peace but you cannot you will not. God will not let you create that world. You get what you want.

You get that partner. You get that child. You get that home. You get that job. It will never be the world that you want. It never will. You win the lottery.

And it will not be the world that you want. But Isaiah wants you to know there is a world of peace in which people are at rest. But the only way into that world is to stand under the banner of the crucified root of Jesse.

It's to stand under the banner of Jesus. And those that rally to that banner are those that say, we do say don't we as Christians, we long for a better world don't we? But now I see that the greatest obstacle to that world is sin.

[ 30 : 49 ] Including my sin. so that my only hope for that better world is to trust in the one who defeated sin. Jesus, I'm going to stand under the banner of your cross which promises me a world of peace inhabited by a people of rest.

hope. Because only under that banner is hope. I read an obituary this week and in that obituary there was a critic, I don't know her, Judith Shulevitz observed that life unlike fiction has neither crisp beginnings nor redemptive endings.

Is that brilliant? life is messier than fiction. And life doesn't look like it has a redemptive end. the great news of Isaiah is that under the banner of Jesus, under the root of Jesse, life ultimately does

have a redemptive ending.

It is a glorious ending and it is a resting place called glory. And that is the world that you and I dream of and because at its centre is Jesus the righteous king, it is a world that when we enter it, it will only get better.

It will only get better. So in that sense it is a little bit like Narnia, the final volume of the series, The Last Battle, where Lewis writes, this is the end of all the stories and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after.

[ 32 : 20 ] But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page.

And now at last they were beginning chapter one of the great story which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Because it's a world of peace inhabited by a people at rest ruled by a righteous king. Let's pray.