

A Child Shall Lead Them
December 4, 2022
Pastor John Mars

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church. Whoever's out there praying for a white Christmas, stop it!

I want to read a passage of scripture for you. This comes from Isaiah, chapter 11, beginning with verse 1.

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots, a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord—
and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness, he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young shall lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child will put his hand in the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

In that day, the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples;
the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.
May God bless the reading of His Word.

A long, long time ago in a land far, far away, a pastor was giving a sermon on the sins of the flesh. And he decided he needed an illustration for as many as he could safely illustrate in church. And so he brought four worms to church. The first worm he put in a

jar of alcohol. The second worm he put in a jar filled with cigarette smoke. The third worm he put in a jar of chocolate syrup. And the fourth worm he put in a jar of pure, clean dirt. After his sermon was over, he retrieved his four jars. The first worm in the jar of alcohol was dead. The second worm in the jar filled with cigarette smoke was also dead. The worm in the third jar filled with chocolate syrup was also dead. And the fourth worm in the clean dirt was very much alive. He said, "Now, Church, what have we learned from this illustration?" And Maxine, who was sitting on the back pew, said, "Well, if you drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and eat lots of chocolate, you won't have worms!"

Perspective is key, isn't it? In the passage of scripture I read a moment ago, you and I see Jesus Christ, don't we? Amen? You should. The Jewish people did as well. They saw Messiah in that passage. But it wasn't that way in the beginning. This passage is what the Jewish people desired of every king anointed over Israel. That was their dream, that one day a monarch would arise that would return the nation to this state of Eden. If you'll read the Old Testament, you'll find that their kings were quite the disappointment. Have you ever been disappointed by a leader? Yeah, me too. When the last of David's line died in exile, they began to see that this passage describes Messiah, the one that would come, the one that would bring true peace. And I want you to hear this today: This peace, this Eden-like peace, is what God has always desired for humanity. Did you know that? That's what God wants for us. That is God's desire for us. and we have that fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, we have the fulfillment of that peace. And we can have that peace, but it's weird. It's weird because it's now and not yet. It's now and not yet. You see, we can have peace in our hearts now, but not peace in our world. Peace in our world will only come about when Jesus reigns. And that is the message of Advent. At Advent we look back to Jesus' coming, His life and His death and the peace that he came to bring. And we look forward to the peace that He will bring to the Earth at His Second Coming. And I don't know about you, but I say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come!" This peace will only be realized when Jesus reigns. Until Jesus returns, we can have peace in our hearts. And we need this peace because our world, and too often our lives, are in chaos. Our world is a mess. Amen? Our world is a mess and that's bad. It's bad, but it's not unexpected. The world is a mess and that's bad. But you know what is tragic? We often allow the world to dictate to us and rob us of our peace. It's bad that the world is a mess. But what's tragic is, we allow the world to slip into our lives and rob us of the peace that Jesus came and died to give us. That's tragic.

My opinion is that we are living right now in one of the supreme examples of how we allow the world to rob us of our peace. Now, what I'm about to share with you is not scripture. It is not divine revelation. This is my opinion. This is what I think. This is my opinion! It is my opinion that Christmas has become too commercialized. Okay, that's my opinion. I'm going to share a story with you about a lady who had a tremendous impact on me. She didn't know it then; she doesn't know it now. I shared this story about this time last year. Fortunately, many of you are like me; you don't remember it. (You can hide your own Easter eggs!) I would apologize for sharing this story again, but that would not be genuine, because I'm not sorry. Here's the story as I remember it: I am not a shopper. (My wife says, "Amen!") If I need to go to a store, I have a list. I know what I

want. I go in and get it and I get out. Now I have gotten hung up in the fishing section in a sporting goods store on occasion. But generally speaking, I get in and get out. I lived in the Boise Valley for 24 years. In the Boise Valley, in Boise, Idaho, there is one large mall. I had lived in the Boise Valley for 9 years before I made it to that mall. But on one occasion when I was there, I got on the elevator and a beautiful young lady got on behind me. She had three little children in tow, and four or five packages in her arms. The three little ones were whimpering, When the door closed, I don't know if I said something or she just volunteered. But with anger in her voice she said, "I will be so glad when Christmas is over!" Here was a beautiful young lady with three beautiful, healthy children, with the obvious means of taking care of those kids, and the world had robbed her of what Jesus died to give her. And she couldn't wait for Christmas to be over. I don't want you to be that young woman this Advent season. I don't want you to allow the world to dictate to you and rob you of the peace Jesus came to give you. The result of God's way, the result of embracing God's ideals, is peace. Jesus said that it's a peace that passes all understanding and transcends all circumstances. It's a quietness. It's a stillness of heart, a stillness of mind, even in the midst of the chaos of this world. It is assurance that drives out fear. One of the plagues of our modern society is a fear of the moment and a fear of the future. We are a people of good news. And the light at the end of the tunnel is not a train; it is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, where He is going to restore peace, not just to our hearts, but peace to our world. There is reconciliation with our world, even though there is no peace.

Now I'm going to use a passage of scripture out of context. I know I'm using it out of context, so don't send me an email! Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added as well." I know in that passage, in that context, He was addressing material things, but this also applies to spiritual things. If you embrace Jesus Christ and make His priorities your priorities during this Advent season, you can have a peace that transcends understanding right now, in your hearts and in your minds. Jesus is the only ruler, the only monarch, the only king that can change hearts. And it is a changed heart that brings about peace, not a changed circumstance. And we can have that right now. Only when Jesus returns will the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And I look forward to that. I say, "Lord Jesus, come and come quickly!" During this Advent, we can experience peace as now and not yet. Until Jesus returns, we follow God's will and God's way and experience that peace.

My prayer for you, my prayer for me, is that we not allow the world to dictate to us, but rather, we dictate to the world. My desire for us is that we make our own decisions and not allow the world to make our decisions for us. Because if you do, you will be that young lady on that elevator that can't wait for the season to be over. I look forward to the day when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Doesn't that sound good? It sounds good to me. But until that happens, may the peace of Advent be yours. Do not allow the world to rob you of what Christ came and died to give you. Let's pray.

So during this time of prayer, this time of quiet, say, "Lord Jesus, thank You for the peace You died to give me, and forgive me when I have allowed the world to rob me of

it. And right now, right here and right now, I resolved not to allow that to happen during this Advent season. Let us pray.

God, we are so grateful for the hope and the peace that we have in You. Forgive us for when we have given it away, forfeited it, squandered it, and allowed the world to take it from us. Right now, in the quietness of this time, we resolve to pay attention. We resolve to be quiet. We resolve to be still. We resolve to concentrate on the peace that You bring in our hearts until we receive it at Your coming in the world. In Christ's name, amen.