

“Aware, Awaken, Arise”

Isaiah 11:1-2, 10

We remember Isaiah as one of the greatest prophets in Jewish history and as one of the most powerful models in the Bible. The book that bears his name describes his consistent lifestyle, his uncompromising convictions, and his clear vision that drove him to continue speaking out despite the unfaithfulness of his people.

Isaiah led with integrity. Integrity means “oneness”, the quality of purity and consistency. This word describes Isaiah, a man of God full of consistency.

Isaiah’s convictions teach us about avoiding ungodly compromise. He furnishes a beautiful case study of a leader who led from vision. He describes a God-given vision that drives him to fulfill his call as a leader. Throughout the book he communicates his vision to the people and warns them to repent. Isaiah predicts the coming of the Messiah as the Ultimate leader for the people of Israel.

As we unpack this piece of scripture in Isaiah, we see that 2020 is not much different than what was happening thousands of years ago. This year we have become aware of the importance of God’s plan and His hand in awakening His people to arise using remnants of faith to press on.

Out of the stump of David’s family represents a new beginning. This stump is all that is left of a once mighty tree (Israel) which is just a field of burned stumps on the landscape of world history.

There are 14 generations from Adam to Jesse, who was the father of David. God promised that his line, his sons, his family would reign forever without end. And when David’s sons and grandsons and great grandsons turned from God and loved the gifts and the flesh more than the Giver and the Father- their kingdoms fell. Their homes fell apart.

It looked as if the whole family tree of Jesse had been chopped right off at the roots But God...our covenant keeping, promising keeping God vowed, "Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot - yes, a new branch bearing fruit from the old root.

The coming of Christ was right through families of messed-up monarchs and battling brothers, through affairs and adultery and more than a feud or two, through skeletons in closets and cheaters at tables. It was in that time of prophets and kings, the time of Mary and Joseph, that men were in genealogies and women were invisible.

The beginnings of the Messiah are exceedingly small. Nothing was left of the family tree except a root. Life emerges from death. Branches grow from roots. This love story has been coming for us all since the beginning. It is possible for you and I to miss it so we are called to pause, wonder, hush, wait. It is during this time we become aware of God's perfect plan all along. Our hearts waiting for the Gift is the art of the gift. Our waiting is often associated with points of pain which become points of power if we choose.

Isaiah 11 allows us to celebrate Jesus' ministry, past and present, but urges us to the place of intercession where we long for creation's promised destiny. This place of intercession awakens our spirit where we allow Jesus to fill us. As we are being filled, the world begins to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Creation is reordered in profound ways as we see the royal child depicted as a shepherd among lions. We are called to look for the small breakthroughs knowing that the points of pain, often crushing, are not intended to be a destination but a process, a new beginning. God's promises can be sabotaged if His people camp out in the awakening stage. This is a place of surrender, offering, sacrifice where new wineskins are created. We are called to seek the shoot that bears witness to God knowing His love never ends. Faith is the greatest equalizer, eraser and definer. When we have an agenda for God, we are not able to see His gifts.

“In that day the heir to David’s throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world”. We are called to step out in confidence. It is in the pressing just like in making bread, we become more pliable so that we rise in Christ. We are no longer called to keep the peace but like Jesus, we are called to make peace. Either we can rise up or sink down. Every trouble remakes the topography of our souls. Getting in the ark of Christ always allows us to rise above the flood of trouble. The remnants have been recovered once again.

There will be a highway for the remnant of His people.

“Nations will rally to Him and the land will be a glorious place.”

Family gives you context

Origin gives understanding

Family Tree of Christ gives Hope

As we leave 2020 behind, may we be encouraged in this new year with the HOPE of the Messiah. With Him, there is no half empty or half full living. Praise be to God when we choose to walk with Him, our lives are refillable.

Good Christian Friends, REJOICE!

John Neale translated our next hymn into English from the Latin and published it in Neal’s Carols for Christmastide in 1853.

The song invites people to rejoice “with heart, soul and voice” - in other words, with their whole being. The reason for rejoicing is the birth of Jesus Christ who “has opened heaven’s door” bringing blessings to all people everywhere.

The last line captures the spirit of the song. We rejoice because “Christ was born to save!” - a line that is sung twice to close the hymn.