

The King is Coming

The Root of Life (O Root of Jesse)

Key idea:

Jesus is the Root of Jesse, Who sustains and nourishes God's people through every season of life, restoring them to God's favor and producing fruit in them and throughout the earth.

Key text:

Isaiah 11:1, 10-12

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit... ¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. ¹¹ 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 Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. ¹² He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Key points:

1. Isaiah prophesied that Israel, Judah, and Assyria would all be cut down like a forest of felled trees.
2. However, Isaiah also used the metaphor of a Root and a Branch from Jesse to promised God's people that they would survive, be restored to God and His blessings, and that the Kingdom would spread to nations throughout the earth.
3. As these metaphors developed in Scripture, it became clear that they referred to a King Who would remove sin in a single day, build God's Temple in the earth, and reign as the Priest-King to establish righteousness and justice.
4. The New Testament presents Jesus as the fulfillment of these prophecies, as the Root and Offspring of Jesse/David.
5. The title of the Root (and Branch) are meant to nourish hope even in dark times.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's text and teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. In Isaiah 6, the LORD told Isaiah that his ministry would fail and that the people of God would be cut down and sent into exile. How early was this in the ministry of Isaiah? How would I respond to God telling me this?
3. Why does the LORD use the metaphor of trees cut down to refer to coming judgment? How does the metaphor of a root surviving work in Isaiah's message? How do I think I would respond to the idea of the root if I were Isaiah?
4. The prophecy in Isaiah refers to the coming King as both the Root and the Branch of Jesse. Why does it refer to Him as both, and not just one or the other? How does each metaphor work in this overall picture Isaiah is painting?
5. In the final few verses of Scripture Jesus refers to Himself as the Root and Offspring of David. How is this related to Isaiah's prophecy of the Root and Branch of Jesse? Why might Isaiah have referred to Jesse rather than David? Why might Jesus have used Root and Offspring rather than Root and Branch?
6. How does Paul use the idea of the Root of Jesse in Romans 15:12? What does this tell me about God's purpose for the nations even in the Old Testament? Does God's plan to draw all nations begin in the New Testament, or is it embedded throughout the Old Testament?
7. When I consider the state of the Church and the world today, does it produce hope and joy, or despair and sorrow? How does the title of Root of Jesse speak to the future of God's People the Church?
8. Do I have any areas in my life where I feel like a tree that has been cut down? How does the title of Jesus as the Root of Jesse bring hope to me in this situation?
9. Look at Malcolm Guite's sonnet "O Radix" (O Root of Jesse). How does he develop the idea of the Root? How does he see it as applying in our modern world where "we surf the surface of a wide screen world, and find no virtue in the virtual"? What is the contrast between the organic metaphor of the Root and the idea of a virtual, widescreen world? How does the word "virtue" function in his metaphor? How does he think we will draw life-giving vitality from the Root of Jesse?
10. Whom can I pray for, share what I have learned, and invite to church this week?

Preview of next week: The Key of Freedom (O Key of David) [Isaiah 22:22; 9:6-7]