

2020.07.19

Title: The Lion, the Lamb, and the Little Child

Text: Isaiah 11:6

Theme: Man and nature are vicious and brutal, but Isaiah tells us a great cosmic reversal is coming and it will be led by a little child.

“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.” Isaiah 11:6 (NIV)

I. Introduction

- A. Jaws, the 1975 movie that emptied beaches.
- B. Our text actually cites “The wolf,” but over time the saying, “the lion shall lie down with the lamb,” has entered our lexicon as a regular saying.
- C. Many people have ridiculed the idea ...
 - 1. “The lion and the lamb may possibly lie down together, but when the lion gets up, the lamb is generally missing.” Henry Wheeler Shaw, *The Wit and Wisdom of Josh Billings*, (1913)
 - 2. “No absolute is going to make the lion lie down with the lamb, unless the lamb is inside.” D.H. Lawrence, (1915)
 - 3. “The lion shall lie down with the lamb, but the lamb won’t get much sleep.” Woody Allen

II. The nature of nature

- A. DH Lawrence suggested, the essence of lion hood is to devour, and the essence of lamb hood is to be devour-able. Any other formulation is unnatural.
- B. Lord Alfred Tennyson’s poem, *Memoriam* (1842.)

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed

- C. Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Annie Dillard moved to the wilderness to learn about the nature of God. She didn’t see love in nature, just cruelty. She watched as a giant water bug sucked out the insides of a frog.
- D. Tennyson’s question of how a God of love could have created a universe filled with brutality led many of the philosopher’s of his time to adopt Darwin’s evolutionary theories.
- E. Frederick Nietzsche declared God was dead, and so the strong man would win and everyone else would submit.
- F. Nietzsche’s philosophy was influential in the 20th century as one tyrant after another rose.

- G. Richard Dawkins uses the phrase red in tooth and claw as nature's testimony against God in his book "The Selfish Gene," Dawkins says,

"I think 'nature, red in tooth and claw' sums up our modern understanding of natural selection admirably. We are survival machines - robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes." Richard Dawkins, "The Selfish Gene," (1976)

- H. Jack Johnson wrote a song called "Never Know."

"Never knowing, Shocking but we're nothing, We're just moments, we're clever but we're clueless, We're just human, Amusing but confusing, We're trying, But where is this all leading, We'll never know." Jack Johnson, "Never Know," (2005)

- I. Are we nothing more than robot vehicles? Are we just moments in time, clever but clueless?

III. Isaiah sees a great cosmic reversal coming.

- A. What is coming? He points to a little child.
B. Plenty think the child who is coming is a son of Adam who will reclaim Adam's place in the garden as leader of the animals. And maybe they're right.
C. But if it's another Adam, it's thin comfort.
D. D.H. Lawrence's full quote goes like this:

"Morality which is based on ideas, or on an ideal, is an unmitigated evil. No absolute is going to make the lion lie down with the lamb unless the lamb is inside. It is no good casting out devils. They belong to us, we must accept them and be at peace with them."

- E. Shortly after writing these words, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot all rose to power and between them killed more than 100 million people.
F. Pol Pot's year zero.
G. Rather than produce an earthly heaven, man is better geared to create hell on earth.
H. Rather than the seed of Adam, could Isaiah's reference to the "little child" refer instead be the offspring of Eve from Genesis 3?
I. Isaiah 7:14, the Christmas verse.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

- G. 700 years before Christ, Isaiah prophesies the Messiah will be named Immanuel, God with us.
H. What it means that God is WITH us.

- I. The friend who comes to you in the gutter and promises His life will be your life.
- J. God WITH us means He never leaves or forsakes us.
- K. That's been the hope of the Hebrew people and it's our only hope.
- L. Plenty of places in the Bible talk about the seed of the man. But what does it mean we're told the Messiah will be the offspring of the woman?
- M. Only Christianity has a God who joins us in the gutter and shares our suffering.

IV. Chapter 9:2-3; 6-7

2'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. Isaiah 9:2

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. ' Isaiah 9:6-7

- A. Israel is in the land of the shadow of death as they face a brutal army of professional soldiers from Assyria.
- B. But Isaiah promises Israel light in the darkness.
- C. In verses 3 to 5, he promises peace even under threat of devastation and destruction
- D. In verse 6 he promises them a child.

“to us a child is born, a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Might God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

- E. It is the great Christmas hope. Mighty God, in the form of a baby, will shine into our darkness and turn war into peace.
- F. Isaiah also shows us that Messiah represents the entire trinitarian Godhead:
 1. Prince of Peace
 2. Wonderful Counselor
 3. Everlasting Father

- G. He comes to take the government on his shoulders, march us through the dark valley, and bring us to resurrection glory.
- H. So the Child in Isaiah 7 is God with us. From Chapter 9, He is the son give to us. And in Isaiah 11:6, He is the little child who will turn creation right side up.

V. Isaiah 11 describes further the child who is coming.

1 "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—" Isaiah 11:1-2

- A. In Verse 1, He is in the royal line of David.
- B. In verse 2, Isaiah says He will be spirit filled.
- C. Verse 3 to 5 speak of His righteousness.

"and he will delight in the fear of the Lord . He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 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." Isaiah 11:3-5

- D. Just as Adam brought physical and spiritual death when he rebelled, King Christ will bring physical and spiritual redemption. Lions will indeed lay down with lambs.
- E. In Chapter 25, verses 7-9, Isaiah tells us what a future under King Jesus will look like.

"On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord , we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." Isaiah 25:7-9

VI. Application

- A. Put aside the old, and take up the new way that is Christ.
 - 1. It's as hard for us, in our natural state, to lay down old grudges and grievances as it is for lions and lambs to become room mates in their natural state.
 - 2. Christ offers us the new if we'll lay down the old.
 - 3. Christ says the truth will set us free. Do we try to find solutions by understanding reality and truth, or do we rely on the brutal force of emotion?
 - 4. Culture hates Christianity at least in part because we are not defined by "group" identities, but by our new nature in Christ. All are welcome.
 - 5. That truth gives us the courage and strength to love, forgive, and be reconciled just as Christ has forgiven us.

B. Do you see what it means when Isaiah says, “unto us a child is given.” Do you see the gift that’s on offer here?

1. What part do we play in this? We don’t. The zeal of the Lord will accomplish it all. Isaiah 9:7

“The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” Isaiah 9:7

2. What awakes the zeal of the Lord - paraphrase Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s sermon, “The Zeal of the Lord.”

3. The Son is given as a great and miraculous gift, how can we not receive Him?

Benediction

Ephesians 3:17-19 - (May) Christ dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Amen.)