

“The Branch”

In-Between: Advent with Isaiah

December 7, 2025

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10

- 1) Read the Scripture aloud or have someone else read it to you. What parts of the Scripture stand out the most to you?
- 2) What’s the difference between a God who drops by for a visit in a disguise and the God who became a human being in a particular family?
- 3) The stump of Jesse is the family of King David, an image of a great and flourishing hope cut back almost to death. Have you ever had a time of great hope and flourishing and then sudden loss? How did you find a reason (a new shoot) to hope and go on?
- 4) The Holy Spirit of God is the one who brings life. Define the blessings that are brought along by the Spirit and named by Isaiah: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge. In whom have you seen these blessings? Have you ever asked God to bless you with the blessings you feel you lack?
- 5) Define “the fear of the Lord.” Can you give better words to the idea, that avoid some of the negative connotations of “fear?” Have you grown in understanding of the phrase, “fear of the Lord” over time?
- 6) What is the difference between having “the fear of the Lord” and “delight...in the fear of the Lord?” Have you ever experienced that delight? How does the image of Jesus’ life help you imagine this way of delight and fear of the Lord?
- 7) Jesus has a different kind of eye and ear by which to see and hear and act. How do we grow our vision, so we can see God’s

righteousness, and act with God's favor? What do you notice about the people whom God blesses (perhaps comparing the Beatitudes of Matthew 5)?

8) Close your eyes to picture the menagerie of animals (lamb, leopard, kid, lion, fatling, cow, bear, ox, asp, adder) and humans (little child, nursing child, weaned child) living in peace. Do you believe God can do this? How does it make you feel to rest in the vision? What is the hardest part to imagine? Give that difficulty to God.

November 30: (Advent 2025 Series) In-between: Advent with Isaiah

The prophet Isaiah spoke to a people walking in darkness. Isaiah prophesied during the rise of the Assyrian empire, a ruthless superpower known for total destruction and domination of any kingdom that rivaled it. Israel was collapsing because of idolatry and injustice. They had drifted away from God. Into this context, the prophet not only offers correction but comfort - not only judgment but joy.

As Christ-followers, we live in-between the tension of the already of Christ's first coming and the not-yet of his second coming. How can we receive God's correction while embracing the joy of preparing our hearts and lives for his second advent?

Advent week #1: The Mountain

Scripture: Isaiah 2: 1-5

1. Can you recall a time when you felt hope in the midst of a "dark" season?
2. What does "walking in the light of the Lord" mean to you personally?
3. Can you recall a time when you felt hope in the midst of a "dark" season?
4. What is the significance of the "mountain of the Lord" in Isaiah's vision?
5. How do the nations respond to God's mountain in verses 2-3? Why do you think this is emphasized?
6. What does it mean that swords will be beaten into plowshares? Is this meant to be symbolic or literal?

7. Isaiah calls God's people to walk in the light now. What might that look like in your daily life?
8. Are there areas in your life where fear, anxiety, or conflict make it difficult to walk in God's light? How can you begin to change that?
9. What role can our church (and small group) play in "walking in the light" collectively?
10. How does living in the light of the Lord give hope for the future, even when the present seems dark?