

# Sermon for The Second Sunday in Advent

**Date:** December 8 2019

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 7:10-17

**Epistle Reading:** Romans 7:1-7

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 1:18-25



**Sermon Text:** Isaiah 7:10-17

**Sermon Title:** Prophecy: The Birth of the Messiah

## Hymns:

LSB 342 – What Hope! An Eden Prophesied

LSB 515 – Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel  
In This Advent

LSB 344 – On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

LSB 350 Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come

LSB 575 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

## Liturgy:

Divine Service: Creative Worship



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## **Text: Isaiah 7:10-17**

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

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.

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Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus who is Christ the Lord. Amen.

In today's Old Testament reading something strange occurs. Reading the whole thing in context clears things up a little bit. The context in which the Old Testament reading takes place is this. Ahaz was not a good king. He often did many evil things, but for the sake of the people, and the promise God had made, God spared Ahaz' kingdom from destruction. What happens right before Isaiah speaks this prophecy is that two kings come together to take Jerusalem. The people and the king are frightened for their lives. They know very well, if the walls are breached, no one lives. The army against them is far, far, superior to their own. Everyone knows it is only a matter of time. Nothing will stop the attack and their destruction.

Then God speaks to the prophet Isaiah. He tells Isaiah to go to a certain place where he will meet king Ahaz. Isaiah is instructed to tell Ahaz, "Do not fear. God will fight on your side. The kings that have come against you will be destroyed." It is recorded that within 65 years these enemies were shattered. There are no descendants of those people alive today. However, at the time, Ahaz was not so sure he could believe God's Word. He did not believe that God's Word was, just that, God's Word. Because he doubted, Isaiah said, "Ask for a sign. Anything at all. What test will you place before God so that you will know that He alone is God?"

Well Ahaz was a spiritual man, though the kind of man that would chase every, and any, new spiritual fad that came along so long as it provided him something he wanted. Yet even this corrupt man knew that you do not put God to the test. What he failed to understand is that when God tells you to do something, you should. He refuses. He says, "I will not put God to the test."

In anger God tell Isaiah to say, "Then I will give you a sign!" But not a sign that Ahaz could understand. That was on purpose. Ahaz was judged that day. God chose to withhold His grace from Ahaz. The prophecy given was for God's people far in the future. To a people who would live hundreds of years later. The prophecy of a child, born to a virgin, who would save the whole world from sin. In other words save the whole world from the mess that it has become. He will restore us, and all of creation, to everything God had intended for us from the beginning. This would be done through the child who would be born. This child would be Immanuel – God With Us.

That is what we read from the Old Testament. Then we read the Epistle reading. Now "Epistle" is just another one of those fancy Church words, that no one else ever uses. It is actually a Greek word which means "letter." The Epistle reading is a reading from one of the Letters in the New Testament. The Letter, or Epistle, that I read from was Romans. Paul wrote the letter to the Christian

churches in Roman to help them deal with many false teachings, misunderstandings, and immoralities with which they were dealing.

In the section we read we find something very difficult to understand. It talks about how the Law applies to us, while we are alive, but not when we are dead. That part is not so tough to grasp. However, then it goes on to say that sin exists only because God's Law tells us what sin is. Stated another way, God's Law is what causes sin to exist. Without God's Law there could be no sin. It is God's Law that makes you a sinful person. If God had not given any rules, there would be no rules to break, and we would not be imperfect.

You see, we are not living in, "Plan B." God knew, from the beginning, that we would fall into sin. In fact, and this gets more difficult, God made the Law, to make you sinful. Why? Why did God do that? Why did He make you sinful on purpose?

The answer is because He wanted to show us how much He loved us. The reason is because He planned to die for us, to show us how much He loved us. We are not living in a world where Gods plans were messed up. This world, this life, these problems that we all live through and deal with, they are God's plan. These things are not happening because God is not in control. These things are happening because God is in control.

Knowing that is what bring us back to the question: "How does a life of trials and troubles prepare us for a life where we will never know those things? How does a life in imperfection, prepare us for a life of perfection?" The answer from God is, "I am God." Sometimes He says a bit more. "I am God. I know what you need. Trust Me. I am God."

That, however, is about all that God has said in answering that question. He is preparing us for things we cannot understand, or even imagine; for wonders so profound they are, in our sinful state, our fallen state, completely beyond our ability to grasp. Too difficult for us but not for Him. The world is not out of His control. He created a Law we could not obey so that He could come and fix what we broke.

That is precisely what was prophesied in Isaiah. The plan was already in action. The Messiah, the Savior, the Fixer of Problems, was already on the way; already in God's plan for us. Part of that plan was revealed to Isaiah that day and recorded for us, so that we would know that God is, as God has always been, God.

You see that is the problem with churches that throw out parts of God's Word when they become inconvenient. When they start saying that society and culture determine what parts of the Bible are really God's Word, and which parts aren't.

When churches start saying things like, “Well that was just for those people, in those days. We know more now. We know better now.” What they are really saying is that culture tells God, what God says. Culture creates God as they want Him to be. Culture changes God, to be whatever they determine they need Him to be. Such churches make God a creation of man, rather than man being the creation of God.

Paul here states profoundly that nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing! God’s Law was given by God, for God’s purpose and plan in our lives, not only here but eternally. We understand the Law of God to do three things. It functions as a Mirror, a Curb, and a Guide or Map.

The Mirror is what shows us that we are not living according to God’s Law. We are not perfect. It does in fact condemn us.

That is not all it does however. It also acts as a Curb, like the curb along the road, that keeps you on the road. It prevents you from wandering off the road, and crashing into the ditch.

Finally it acts as a Guide, or a Map. It shows us the way home. It shows us the way to Heaven.

You see, the Gospel is not the solution, the Law is. The Gospel only tells us how the Law was fulfilled. The Gospel only tells us how the Law has been kept perfectly for us. The Gospel does not replace the Law. The Gospel tells how the Law no longer crushes us, but now because of what Jesus has done saves us. You see if it is God’s Law that makes us sinful then it must be true that God’s Law is also what makes us perfect.

How did that happen? When did that happen? Who made it happen? Isaiah told us that One was to come who would do just that. Save us, through the Law. We would know He had come, when a child was born of a virgin, and He would be Immanuel. God with us. God made the Law to crush us, so that God could come and save us. In doing so, He also showed us how much He loved us, by the way He saved us. By enduring some of the worst that we as a human race could dish out and saying, “Father forgive them.”

The Gospel tells us who that is. I read it for you from Matthew chapter one. A young woman named Mary was chosen. Before she was married she became pregnant by the power of God. Joseph was told to protect and care for her and the child, who is God’s Son. That message was brought to Mary and Joseph by Gabriel. A great general of the Lord’s holy army who serves in the throne room of the palace at New Jerusalem. An angel who serves continually in the presence of

Almighty God. This is the one whom God entrusted this very important messages. The message that His Son would be born.

That is what the Advent season is about. The anticipation of the birth of the Son of God. The one who made us perfect by the Law. He, Jesus – a name which means, “He Saves” – did everything the Law said He would do. He did everything the Law said He must do. He did everything the Law required him to do. In doing so He opened the way for us to enter Heaven’s Gates with steadfast assurance, free of doubt or fear. More than that, but to also walk into the Great Hall of the Palace; to walk right up to the throne, and see the face of God. The same face that Mary saw as she held Him in her arms. Christmas – Christ’s Celebration, is just that, a celebration of Jesus’ salvation for you.

Praise His holy Name. Amen.

**As we Gather**

**Children's Sermon**