

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. 6The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 9They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*

*10On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.*

A cat and a pit bull. Everything I know about the world tells me this is what should have happened when a new cat showed up on the pit bull's turf. The cat hisses – the dog barks and makes a beeline right for that feline. Snap – no more kitty.

But when my daughter, Katie, invited a stray cat into the house where she lives this is what did happen: The cat hissed – arched his back – and the pit bull hid her head under her paws. In the two years since it still happens – the cat comes into the room and the pit bull cowers – hides behind her owner or hides her head in her paws.

A long time ago Isaiah promised: The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling 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 asp and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.

These words paint a picture of a world transformed – where the law of the jungle has been repealed. Not only the fittest will survive and the strongest and the meanest but the gentle and the meek and the weak.

Peace. Not the cat intimidating the pit bull as unlikely as that is but peace - not tolerance but respect – not fear but a child playing among the poisonous snakes. Peace.

How could such a peace ever come to be? Isaiah said in this way, “A shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” Jesse was the father of David, the great king of Israel. After David came generations of his descendents ruling on the throne of Judah. But then the nation was conquered, the line of rulers going back to David was cut off – the tree that began with Jesse chopped down with only a stump remaining.

But Isaiah promised, “A shoot shall come from the stump of Jesse, a descendent of David who will rule. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him. His delight will be in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what his eyes see nor decide by what his ears hear but with righteousness she shall judge the poor, and with equity for the meek of the earth.”

A king who will see deep into the heart of things – not influenced by appearances – how we dress or how we talk - but who will be on the side of justice for the poor and the meek.

“He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”

Words will be his weapon. Not the chariots and swords and armies of all the kings that had come before - not the guns and tanks and grenades of those who came after - but words.

Jesus is this king – this shoot from Jesse's stump. God sent his Son to see deep into human hearts and to speak a word that kills and makes alive. Other rulers use force and intimidation to gain followers but Jesus forgives the enemy and calls those who hate him to faith.

Dare we believe in him – entrust our lives to him and his way of peace?

Think of where his delight in the Lord led him – to be born without a home – without grandparents and uncles and aunts nearby. Rough characters – low class shepherds took their place, coming to see him lying in the manger.

Think of where his delight in the Lord led him through forty days of hunger in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. Later surrounded by crowds who wanted help and healing from him – more and more and more – but who often did not follow his word.

Think of where his delight in the Lord led him – to betrayal into the hands of those who wanted him dead and to the cross. And all the way he never killed anyone but made many alive.

Dare you believe in him – entrust your life to him and his way of peace?

A few who witnessed the wolf coming and devouring this little lamb named Jesus saw him alive once more – touched his wounds and believed, and followed. They became lambs whose delight was in the fear of the Lord and whose only weapons were words. Because of them and God's spirit working through them we are gathered here today.

Can it really be true that Isaiah's vision of peace is God's vision for this dog-eat-dog creation? Could we really entrust ourselves to the word of this one who was crucified and to the witness of those who saw him alive once more? Could we really believe that God will have the last word and that word will be a word of true peace?

Maybe there have been some shoots growing from stumps in your life – I know there have been some in mine. Some have forgiven me – some I have forgiven and peace has been the gift of the Lord in whom I delight. Not a crushing of my enemies but a new day – as surprising as a wolf and a lamb living together.

May God grant it to us all. Amen.

