

Morning sermon 26.12.21

A Gathered People (Isaiah 11:1-10)

This passage from Isaiah is clearly Messianic: it is all about the Lord Jesus. However, it speaks of Him in modest terms, anticipating the manger. He is described unappealingly as a rod or twig (v1). Rather than referring to Christ's great ancestor King David, Isaiah speaks of the lesser-known Jesse, a man who lived an unremarkable life in the small village of Bethlehem. The 'root' of Jesse signifies growth and development, and eventually fruitfulness for the entire world. Jesus is lifted up as a banner to which all peoples have been called (v10).

1. **We are not an accident**, either as churches or as individuals. God has purposefully called us, despite our weaknesses and shortcomings.

2, **A signal was given**. The star, a supernatural phenomenon, was a clear sign for those who had eyes to see, but for the most part it went unnoticed. Similarly, Jesus was not conspicuously great as the world understands greatness. He came from the insignificant town of Nazareth and had to flee from Herod into Egypt. People are by nature drawn to celebrity, money or strength of arms but God shows us the horrific sight of the Cross, a place of agony, criminality and seeming failure. We need to be discerning, following Christ's example of not judging by outward appearances (v3). Though the Cross is unattractive, it is absolutely necessary and speaks of God's mercy and love to us. It is also a fulfilment of prophecy. The Cross is our signal, the banner to all peoples (v10) and anyone who recognises that they are a sinner and looks to the crucified Christ will live.

3. **Making enquiry** (v10). We are meant to have enquiring minds and not be satisfied with easy answers, especially about ourselves. Jesus is the answer to our deepest questions. As we learn more we will continue to ask questions and must not close our minds. ,

4. **His glorious resting place** (v11). In one sense, Christ's resting place is in glory. He sits at His Father's right hand, His work accomplished.. Yet His resting place is also with us, the church. This is true of any local church; the numbers don't matter. We can make a home that is more comfortable and fit for Him by becoming more sanctified, and not harbouring the world or cherishing idols. Christ will be present wherever His people are gathered.