

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Dec. 8-9, 2019.

Based on Isaiah 11:1-9 (The Peaceable Kingdom).

### A Little Child Shall Lead Them

I love this time of year... especially singing Christmas songs. As a child I would wake up every morning after thanksgiving to my mom playing Christmas albums on our giant wooden record player thing with built in speakers. It was the Muppets Christmas, Beach Boys, and Motown to name a few.

A Christmas song I discovered in the past few years that speaks to me now is called "My Grown-up Christmas List." You may have heard it. This song reminds me of our Isaiah chapter 11 lesson for today... which scholars fondly call the Peaceable Kingdom. The chorus of "My Grown-up Christmas List" goes like this:

*So here's my lifelong wish  
My grown up Christmas list  
Not for myself but for a world in need  
No more lives torn apart  
That wars would never start  
And time would heal all hearts  
And everyone would have a friend  
And right would always win  
And love would never end,  
This is my grown up Christmas list.*

So, in our first lesson, the prophet Isaiah is writing to the people who are about to go into exile against their will. These are difficult times for the people of Judah and Israel. Their kingdom is already divided. Some worship in Jerusalem and others worship on the "wrong mountain." They have theological and ideological differences that divide them. Isaiah warns them that grief and pain are coming because of their turning away from God and neighbor. All things familiar to them... their homes, their temple, and their synagogues will be taken from them, and their families will be scattered because of being conquered by world powers like the Assyrians and later the Babylonians.

But in the midst of this reality, Isaiah has the audacity to preach hope in times of chaos... about a future when an ideal king will come to rule... and when natural enemies like a wolf and lamb will one day live in harmony... and little child shall lead them. He speaks of a time when God will bring a new ruler from the stump of Jesse... which means from the line of King David. Jesse was David's father. King David, despite all his human flaws, was the image Isaiah was appealing to...

the greatest king in Israel's history. Through David, they experienced an extended period of peace marked by his willingness to protect the poor and his nation's other marginalized groups, especially widows and orphans. Out of seemingly dead stump, new life will sprout.

I think these lessons speak to us today. With clear political and religious divides in our country and senseless violence happening almost daily, it is easy to fall into despair.

Right here in our back yard many people are experiencing shock and grief because of recent school violence in Waukesha and Oshkosh. In Oshkosh, we learned that a student attacked a resource officer in his office and the officer had no choice but to fire his weapon in self-defense. Gun shots rang through the hallways and the attacker was shot. Chaos ensued... some ran... others locked down. All of a sudden, life changed forever for anyone who was there and affected by the violence... the sights, the sounds, and the fears. One teacher from Oshkosh West gave me some hope after sitting with his students on Friday in class... that he feels young people are resilient. They were instructed to sit with their students and just be present.

As Christians, we are in the season of hope. We believe this ideal king coming into the world was Jesus. We will celebrate his birth very soon in church. He is the little child that shall lead them. He is our Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Lord. He is our Messiah.

An image of the peaceable kingdom occurred in the wake of the violence in Oshkosh this week. Speaking of a child shall lead them... there was a story of 17-year old Muslim girl from Oshkosh West High School, Duaa Ahmad, who happened to exit the school across from the Mosque she belonged to. She ran across the street, with dozens of others, quickly punched in the security code of her mosque, and held the door for about 100 students rushing into the mosque. She was scared herself, but put others first. After everyone was in, she went in. And with so much hate in our world, especially toward Muslims, this is a sign to me of the peace Isaiah is prophesying. These students may have never entered a mosque in their lives. But now, one act of love, will change their hearts and minds forever about Muslims.

If you haven't noticed all of our lessons are about including people who have differences. Natural enemies will one day come together as one. Jews and Gentiles became part of the early Christian church despite huge differences. Paul told them to get along. Figure it out. Christ will hold them together.

Our lessons also call us into a time of repentance. We are not to judge others by what our eyes see or ears hear. We are to extend welcome to the stranger and those who are different than us. The king we follow cared for the meek of the earth.

May you get a sense of the peaceable kingdom today as we share communion.  
All of us come to the table as equals... or as Luther said, "We are beggars." We  
are all in need of God's grace and forgiveness. And today you will receive that.

Amen!