

Getting To Christmas
Righteousness and Peace are Waiting
Isaiah 11:1-9

- I. I suspect I'm like most people – I don't like waiting.
 - a. I remember my step-mother counting to ten.
 - b. I've had enough of dial-up and I'm switching to broadband – because of the waiting.
 - c. Christmas is about waiting.
 - i. Waiting from Thanksgiving until the 25th. {It's killing me!}
 - ii. Advent is a celebration of expectation and anticipation of the coming of Jesus.
 - iii. We are jazzed about Christmas because it celebrates the birth of Jesus – the Messiah, the Chosen One of God; the Savior which is Christ the Lord.
 - d. Israel had been waiting for a Messiah for a long time.
 - i. We wait a month from Thanksgiving to Christmas.
 - ii. The people of Israel had waited for hundreds of years.
 - 1. Hope runs thin after that long –
 - 2. Vigilance wanes after that long –
 - e. Scripture is full of prophecies that foretell the coming of the Messiah – Jesus.
 - i. From today until Christmas Eve we're going to look at some of those prophecies.
 - 1. We're going to celebrate their truth – the Messiah is coming (HAS COME).
 - 2. We're also going to see that the Messiah doesn't come "empty handed."
 - a. The Messiah comes and brings blessings, gifts and Good News.
 - b. As we wait for Christmas, we're waiting not just for the Messiah, but for all the good gifts that he brings.
 - f. Isaiah 11 reveals three things that are waiting for us at the coming of the Messiah will bring. So while we're getting to Christmas – let's understand what's waiting.
- II. First, righteousness is waiting.
 - a. In the Old Testament righteousness is not about proper conduct or adherence to a set of rules.
 - i. It is about fulfilling the demands of a relationship.
 - ii. It's about giving each relationship what it is due.
 - 1. All of us have a wide variety of relationships.
 - 2. In those relationships we play a variety of roles: wife, husband, parent, son, daughter, employee, or boss.
 - 3. How we fulfill the demands of that relationship is what the Old Testament calls righteousness.
 - iii. This expresses itself in two main ways.
 - b. Being in right relationship to God.
 - i. Fulfilling the demands of our relationship to God.
 - 1. God tells us directly what this means.

2. Micah 6:8 says, "He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."
- ii. Are you doing justice? {working toward fairness, acceptance for all people}
 1. Are you showing mercy? {forgiveness w/o grudge; grace without retribution}
 2. Are you walking (humbly) with God? {"Humility is not thinking of yourself less, it's thinking of God more"}
- c. Being in right relationship to others.
 - i. Fulfilling the demands of this relationship means that you treat others the way God would have you.
 - ii. Micah 6:8 again.
 1. Being in right relationship with God is intertwined with your relationships with others.
 2. It's impossible to do justice and show mercy apart from a right relationship with God and a right relationship to others.
- d. You cannot be in right relationship with God if you are not in right relationship with others.
 - i. You cannot be in right relationship with others if you are not in right relationship with God.
 - ii. The circle is closed.
- e. The righteousness of God is made known to Christians in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - i. Romans 1:17 – "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written; "The righteous will live by faith."
 - ii. A Christian's righteousness depends on our trust and acceptance of Jesus as God's Anointed Son.
 1. That acceptance is primarily expressed in a relationship.
 2. We call it being a disciple – a follower.
 3. It describes the relationship between a leader and a follower.
- f. Jesus' coming ushers in a new covenant between human beings and God.
 - i. A covenant is a social contract that spells out the responsibilities of each party.
 - ii. It's an agreement that defines a relationship.
 - iii. The Good News is that God wants a relationship with you.
 1. As we wait for Christmas, know that it is God's desire to make you righteous.
 2. God wants a right relationship with you; one that is filled full.
 3. He wants you experience the joy, peace and companionship that He created relationships to be.

III. Peace is waiting.

- a. Peace is the result of righteousness.
 - i. The progression in Isaiah 11 is no accident
 1. In verses 4 and 5 Isaiah says, "But with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist."
 2. What follows verse five is a beautiful picture of peace.

- a. The wolf lives with the lamb.
 - b. The leopard lies down with the goat.
 - ii. While this is certainly a picture of the future of God's kingdom, it also is a message for us right now.
 - 1. While we are waiting for Christmas – peace comes.
 - 2. It's not just coming – one day – in the future – sometime.
 - a. It's here and its now.
 - b. Jesus said so himself in John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”
 - c. We have peace – we can have peace (if we want it) – Jesus gave it to us.
 - 3. The Christmas story itself is about peace.
 - a. In Luke 2:14 the angels sing: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”
 - b. Jesus' coming heralds a time of peace.
 - c. In Luke 2:29, Simeon greets the infant Jesus in the temple and says, “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.”
 - iii. Those two verses show us what the coming of peace means.
 - b. It means the promise of abundant life.
 - i. When Jesus said, “I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly;” I don't think he meant that we'd have to wait for it. {John 10:10}
 - ii. I think he meant that its available and “ready for consumption” right now.
 - iii. The blessings of being a follower of Jesus begin right now – today.
 - c. It also means the promise of eternal life.
 - i. The blessings of being a follower of Jesus last for eternity.
 - ii. Simeon is looking forward to the promise of eternal life and the peace we will find there – in God's Kingdom.
 - iii. While we celebrate that peace and life that come to us now (in this life), we can't forget that something even better than what we have right now has been prepared for us – a land not made with human hands, but eternal in the heavens.
 - d. Jesus coming brings peace – peace on earth and good will toward all.
 - i. This peace that Jesus brings isn't just a wish – it's not a pipe dream.
 - ii. It's real and powerful and possible and better than we can ever hope to imagine.
- IV. Finally, Knowing God is waiting.
 - a. Knowledge of the Lord.
 - i. One part of this is cognition
 - 1. It's what we know intellectually with our brains.
 - 2. It's the part that perceives the Bible and gets the historicity of Jesus.
 - ii. We shouldn't discount this intellectual part of our faith.
 - 1. On some level the whole thing has to make some sense.
 - 2. God gave me this brain and I think he wants me use it to discover him and know him more and more and more.
 - b. Going through life together with God.
 - i. Another part of knowing God is relational.

1. Knowing happens slowly as a body of experiences builds up.
 2. Those shared experiences become the foundation upon which we build relationships.
 - a. Relationships remain surface and shallow where common experiences don't exist.
 - b. The opposite is also true; shared experience leads to deep relationships and truly "knowing" one another.
 - ii. A third part of this is acknowledgement.
 1. This is where commitment to the relationship becomes self-evident.
 2. It's where we say "I belong to God."
 - a. It's also where God says, "You belong to me."
 - c. Would it surprise you to learn that God wants you to know him?
 - i. He is not a god who wants to remain hidden.
 - ii. So much is tied up in relationships – and God knows it – and wants you to know Him through those relationships.
 - iii. Check out Galatians 4:8-9: "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God – or rather are known by God – how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?"
 1. We are known by God.
 2. Something scary, but also something awe-inspiring and spirit filled in that.
 - d. Here's the deal that God's offering.
 - i. You'll become righteous.
 - ii. You will experience peace.
 - iii. You will know God. Really, really know him. (He promises)
- V. The prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah have a lot to teach us.
- a. God brings righteousness, peace, and even knowledge of himself.
 - i. God wants relationships that are fulfilled, trusting, and open.
 - ii. This year as we wait for Christmas, what is God saying to us?
 - b. Getting to Christmas requires patience, waiting, and faith.
 - i. But on the road to getting there we realize that God has delivered some gifts in advance.
 - ii. We don't have to wait until we get there. We can open our presents early.
 - iii. If you are already a follower of Jesus ...
 1. But you're not experiencing Peace, righteousness, or knowledge of God – it's never too late to begin that trek.
 2. Open your presents early.
 - iv. If all this stuff about Jesus is new to you.
 1. The offer still stands.
 2. Righteousness, Peace and God.
 3. While we're getting closer to Christmas – getting closer to the birth of the Messiah.
 4. While we're celebrating this holiday with our family.
 - v. All God needs is a yes (a nod of the head), and he will begin the work in you that he has promised.
 1. Righteousness and Peace are waiting.
 2. Wait no longer.