

Vespers I
29 November 2009
Concordia Lutheran Mission
Terrebonne, Oregon

“The Stem of Jesse is Jesus Christ Who Raises up the House of David by the Gospel of Christ-Crucified.”

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,
and a Branch shall grow out of his roots”

Isaiah 11:1

Introduction

Who is Jesse and what is this Branch? Jesse is the father of King David.¹ And from David descends the Messiah, the Savior of the world, who is the Branch.²

From the fallen house of David springs the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Through His Work on the Cross, He redeems the world from sin.

And this redemption Christ distributes through the Gospel.

And through the Gospel comes the gathering of the faithful, the Church. This Church is also the House of David because Christ is the Son of David.

Christ, therefore, raised up the House of David, the Church, through the Gospel.

¹And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.” **Ruth 4:22.**

²“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.” **II Samuel 7:12-13. St. Luke 3:23, 31.** “But while he though on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” **St. Matthew 1:20-21.** “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” **Jeremiah 23:5-6.**

I. The House of David Follows the Path of All Men to Ruin by Departing from God's Word.

A. Isaiah Chapter 11 is about the Messiah and His work to save through the Gospel.

During this season of Advent, we will be meditating on Chapter 11 of the Book of Isaiah.

Chapter 11 of the Book of Isaiah is a famous chapter about the Person and Work of Christ to save men from their sins and give eternal life. For example, the famous hymn, "Behold, a Branch is Growing", is based upon verse one of this chapter.³

Another example: The Sevenfold Gifts of the Spirit we learn from this chapter. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes:

V. 2: 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 OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD. ... To the Spirit, who rests upon him, are given seven names that designate the Spirit's various gifts and powers. On the basis of this passage the church speaks of a Spiritus septiformis. Accordingly, the prophecy of Zechariah, 4,6.10, and Rev. 1,4; 3,1; 4,5; 5,6 speak of the seven eyes or the seven Spirits of God, that is, of the Spirit of God in the diversity of his gifts, powers, and activities.⁴

Finally, we have the famous passage regarding world peace from Isaiah 11: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb"⁵

These passages reflect the Person and Work of Christ, who is True God and True man, and who brings righteousness and true peace on earth between God and man through the Gospel.⁶ The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt⁷ writes of this chapter of Isaiah:

³*The Lutheran Hymnal*, hymn # 645.

⁴*Isaiah: The First Twelve Chapters*, p. 119.

⁵**verse 6.**

⁶"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." **St. Luke 2:14.**

⁷"Stoeckhardt, Georg; b. February 17, 1842, at Chemnitz, Saxony; received his preparatory education in the Lateinschule at Tharandt and the Fuerstenschule at Meissen; studied

In Chap 11, therefore, ... is described the kingdom and rule of Christ, the Son of David, from its initial humble beginnings until its final, glorious day. It is an inconspicuous shoot that springs forth from the root of Jesse. But it is, nevertheless, a Man with whom God is pleased, who offers his life to God out of fear and love. And after he has in the power of God's Spirit completed his work on earth, he sits upon the throne of God; he himself is the mighty God. He pours out his Spirit on all flesh and implants into men's hearts fear and love of God. Upon this sinful earth he plants a kingdom of peace and love, a paradise of God. He gathers a people from Jews and Gentiles and with his mighty arm protects his church from the Gentiles and with his mighty arm protects his church from the wicked and from the world that is hostile to God. And eventually he will redeem his people from all evil and grant it victory over all its adversaries and to partake of his heavenly, divine glory.⁸

B. Christ is born in the midst of the fallen House of David.

Christ, our Glorious King and Savior, is born in the days when the House of David has fallen on hard times. For Isaiah writes of Christ's birth:

theology at Krlangen and Leipzig 1862- 6 In 1878 he became pastor of Holy Cross Church, St. Louis, and, having since 1879 lectured on Old and New Testament Exegesis at Concordia Seminary, was elected professor in 1887. In 1903 Luther Seminary, Hamline, Minn., created him a Doctor of Divinity. D. January 9, 1913, Stoeckhardt was an exegete of the first rank. Coupled with his great learning, his familiarity with the original languages, etc., and his logical mind was his firm belief in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and his childlike acceptance of all the teachings of Scripture, his great love of the revealed truth. He permitted nothing but the text to influence his thought. Concentrating all the powers of his believing heart and mind on the written Word, he obtained a wonderful grasp of the deep thoughts of the Spirit, and he had the rare gift of unfolding them in concise, clear, convincing language. ... The Missouri Synod owes much to him; his exegetical ability and love of the truth of Scripture made him one of the leaders with Walther, in the controversy on election and conversion and in the other battles the Church was, and is, engaged in, such as for verbal inspiration. In line with the article written on his accession to the chair of Exegesis: "How Can and Should Each Individual Lutheran Lend His Aid toward the Preservation of the Pure Doctrine by the Church?" he labored, by word and pen (his doctrinal articles in *Lehre und Wehre*, in *Lutheraner* and in the synodical reports), to conserve this most precious treasure of the Missouri Synod; and he admirably succeeded in impressing upon both his students and his readers his exegetical method, his loving reverence for the written Word." *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, pp. 729, 730, s.v. "Stoeckhardt, Georg".

⁸*Isaiah: The First Twelve Chapters*, p. 129.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots⁹

Jesse is the father of David. In the book of **Ruth** we read:

And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.¹⁰

And from David would descend the Savior according to God's Promise:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.¹¹

And so Isaiah rightly tells us that the Messiah would spring from the House of Jesse. But the scenario is rather odd. After all, from the House of Jesse springs the royal House of David. Here the prophet Isaiah describes the regal house not as a mighty, soaring oak or cedar, but as a stump.¹² The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes:

⁹**Isaiah 11:1.** St. Paul also cites this passage from Isaiah: "And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust." **Romans 15:12.**

¹⁰**Ruth 4:22.**

¹¹**II Samuel 7:12-13.** Luther comments on **II Samuel 7**: "This passage: "I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to Me a Son" (Heb. 1:5) they also have weakened as though they were teachers merely to weaken Scripture; for they say that the passage has two meanings, one referring to Solomon as a type of Christ, and the other to Christ. If we permit that Scripture does not have one clear meaning, it will never avail in controversy. . . . Hence this passage is to be understood from 2 Sam. 7 and not from I Chron. 23, to refer to Christ; then its conclusion and proof are convincing.' (*Church Postil, Epistle Part. Another Exposition of the Christmas Epistle*, XII, 228, 230; SL XII, 169 ff.)" Quoted in the Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther's, *The Evangelical Lutheran Church, The True Visible Church of God Upon Earth*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, rpr. 1987, *Concordia Heritage Series*, p. 77.

¹²Christ's Kingdom, however, is described as a mighty, towering tree: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set *it*; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant *it* upon an high mountain and eminent: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green

Isaiah speaks now about a future David, who should arise from the family of Jesse or David, but in humble, miserable circumstances. Before this the house and family of David especially in the days of David and Solomon, resembled a mighty, proud tree. But now, at the time the prophet has in view, the mighty trunk with its limbs and its top has been hewn down. There remains only a stump, a “geza”, a rootstock, “sharashiym”. The House of David has returned to its humble beginnings. Yet look, out of this stump and rootstock comes forth a shoot, a fresh, green branch. That a weathered tree stump, which possesses no more life and no more vitality, nevertheless, drives forth a living branch occurs contrary to the course of nature. It is a miracle of God.¹³

The Messiah springs from the House of Jesse and the royal House of David. But He arises at a time when the House of David is in a state of severe disrepair.

C. The House of David has gone the way of all flesh: departure from God and His Word ending in ruin.

What has happened to the mighty House of David that it should be found in such a lowly state? The House of David has gone the way of all flesh: The House of David forsook God’s Word and ended in ruin. While David was faithful, many of his descendants were not. And God required the sons of David to be faithful to His Word just as He required it of the people of Israel to be faithful to His Word lest He bring them to ruin. In **I Chronicles** King David says to Solomon:

Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.¹⁴

tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done *it*.” **Ezekiel 17:22-24**. “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is he least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” **St. Matthew 31-32**. Here Jesus Himself, as did also Ezekiel, notes the humble beginnings as has Isaiah. And from these humble beginnings grows Christ’s great and glorious Kingdom, the Church.

¹³*Isaiah: The First Twelve Chapters*, p. 118.

¹⁴**II Chronicles 22:12-13**. See also **I Kings 9:3-9**.

Of course, Solomon did not continue faithfully in the Lord's Word in spite of being richly blessed by God.¹⁵ At the end of Solomon's reign, the Northern Tribes of Israel were taken away from the House of David and given to the House of Jeroboam because of Solomon's apostasy.¹⁶ And from there the House of David spiraled downward, with a some sporadic lurches upward thanks to a few faithful descendants who came to the throne. Luther writes:

Isaiah also agrees with this meaning when he says: "There shall come forth a Shoot from the stump (or trunk) of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Is. 11:1). For Christ came into the flesh at the time when the tribe of David was lying completely neglected and had almost ceased to exist. No longer was there a king born of the seed of David sitting on David's throne. The priests and high priests had already risen up and were struggling against the tribe of Judah for control of the state. This is clear from the history of the Maccabees and from Philo. Furthermore, the priests won out, so that the tribe of Judah had no hope of recovering its royal position, for heathen nations were ruling. So, with the situation of the tribe of Judah damaged and in difficult straits, Christ came to take the throne again, just as had been promised. This is what Isaiah calls a Shoot and a Branch coming from a dead trunk. Jacob's prophecy also pertained to this – that the scepter would not depart from Judah nor the ruler from his loins until that Shiloh come, etc. (cf. Gen. 49:10), that is, Christ would come at the time when the tribe of Judah had lost its controlling authority and royal dignity. When He says that He would come "after the glory," that is, after His people and especially the ruling tribe of Judah had been humiliated, He realties this to the disgrace and debasement of the tribe of Judah.¹⁷

Because the House of David did not continue in God's Word, it went the way of all flesh and descended into ruin.

¹⁵"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. and he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that *is* in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." **I Kings 4:29-34.**

¹⁶**I Kings 11:29-39**

¹⁷*Luther's Works*, Vol. 16, pp. 29, 30.

II. Christ, the Son of Jesse and David, Raises Up the House of David, i.e. the Church, through the Gospel.

A. Christ, the Savior, emerges from the fallen House of David to redeem the world.

Remarkably, however, out of this fall of the House of David the Lord still brings forth good and raises up from this withered trunk the Redeemer and Savior of the world. As from the fall of Adam so also from the fall of the House of David God brings forth out of calamity the Redeemer of the House of David and the Savior of all the descendant of Adam. Isaiah writes:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots¹⁸

This Branch and Redeemer is Jesus Christ. St. Paul writes:

And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.¹⁹

This Root of Jesse arises out of humble beginnings. In St. Luke's Gospel we read:

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.²⁰

So, here are Jesus' parents, descendants of David, but not living in royal and palatial splendor. Indeed, Christ is not even born in the royal capital of Jerusalem, but rather in the humble city of Bethlehem in a manger. The prophet Micah writes:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be* ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.²¹

¹⁸**Isaiah 11:1.**

¹⁹**Romans 15:12.**

²⁰**St. Luke 2:4-5.**

²¹**Micah 5:2.**

Within these humble beginnings, however, there is majesty, intimated by the words: “*to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*” This descendant of David possesses Majesty because He is royalty, regal, a ruler. This ruler possesses Majesty, moreover, because He is from everlasting.

Everlasting? What man is from everlasting? No mere mortal man is from everlasting, but the Man who is also the True and Eternal God. Hence, the prophet Isaiah writes elsewhere:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.²²

And because this Ruler is the Eternal and Almighty God, He is able to raise up not only the sons of Israel and the House of David, but the Gentiles also. The prophet Isaiah writes:

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.²³

A “light thing” to pay the infinite and eternal debt for the sins of Israel? Yes, according not to the magnitude of the work but the Majesty of the Person. For here God speaks not according to the magnitude of the work, but rather according to the Majesty of the Person who does the work: The Infinite and Eternal Son of God. Isaiah, therefore, goes on to write that because Christ is the Infinite and Almighty God, He has power to spare and so God makes Him also the Savior of the Gentiles.

So, here is the Ruler who has the power to redeem and save because He is the Almighty God. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

The reason why this Child, this Son, is also called **Counselor** is that He, in counsel with [the other Persons of] the Holy Trinity, helped reach the conclusion of how fallen mankind could be helped again. The unending righteousness of God was offended by the Fall of Adam. Now then, there was only an unending payment required, which neither angel nor man could provide. Therefore there was no counsel either in heaven or upon earth. Thus, the Son of God, the eternal Wisdom, came up with the counsel that He would volunteer Himself as Mediator

²²**Isaiah 9:6.**

²³**Isaiah 49:6.**

and Redeemer, that He especially in the fullness of time wanted to take into Himself human nature and within it make payment for us men.²⁴

This King and Ruler, then, rules graciously, sacrificing His own life in order to redeem and to raise up the sons of men and the House of David.

B. Christ raises up the Church, i.e. the House of David, by His gracious Rule of Absolution and Faith.

And Christ rules through the Gospel. St. Paul writes:

And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.²⁵

St. Paul here says that Christ rules in such a way the Gentiles that they trust in Him. This rule is the gracious rule of the Gospel, wherein God forgives sins and saves. St. John the Apostle writes:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.²⁶

The prophet Zechariah writes of this gracious rule of peace with God through absolution of all sins:

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the Horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his

²⁴*Seven Christmas Sermons*, pp. 75, 76. “Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) has rightly been classified the ‘third preeminent theologian after Luther and Chemnitz.’ ... However, while Gerhard is best remembered for his great dogmatics, the *Loci Theologici*, Gerhard produced a number of devotional volumes and preach many sermons to the ‘common man.’ The sermons in this volume were apparently preached when Gerhard was 31 years old and already superintendent at Heldburg and a Doctor of Divinity.” **Foreword** from *Seven Christmas Sermons*.

²⁵**Romans 15:12.**

²⁶**St. John 20:21-23.**

dominion *shall be* from seas *even* to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.²⁷

Luther writes:

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off. Here He Himself goes on to explain that the kingdom of Christ shall not be furnished physically with weapons; for He says that He will have neither chariots nor horses nor bows in His kingdom, as He also says in Is. 2:4: “Neither shall they learn war any more, etc.” ... *And he shall teach peace to the Gentiles.* ... It is for this reason that He will need neither chariot, nor horse, nor bow, nor battle. For He will be a “Prince of Peace,” as Is. 9:6 also says; and this peace is to be not only among the Jews, of whom only a few will accept it, but also among the Gentiles. Therefore His rule will consist in the Word or in speech, because He says here that He will speak, or teach, peace to the Gentiles. ... *His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.* ... These words are taken from Ps. 72:8, so that one may see that the psalm is not to be understood as referring to Solomon, as the Jews think, but to Christ Himself. For in these words the whole earth is made subject to Christ: “from one sea” – that is, from the Dead Sea in Judea – “to all other seas” round about; and “from the River” – the Jordan – “to the ends of the earth.” For His kingdom began in Judea where the Dead Sea and the Jordan are, and from there spread about into all the world.²⁸

Again, Luther writes of Christ rebuilding the House of David, i.e. building the Church, through the Gospel because He is the Almighty God and also the Son of David:

It is the holy Christian church, which extends to the ends of the earth. Furthermore, it is an everlasting house, a house that will endure and live forever, a house in which God remains and lives and keeps house forever. What a house and temple that will become! Now let us consider the carpenter, or master builder, of this house. He is to be a man and a Son of David, for the text speaks of *one of your own sons* (I Chron. 17:11). Yet he is to build a house of God which is to be better and more glorious than heaven and earth and, in addition, is to stand forever. Whence will he derive the skill and the power for this? Neither man’s nor angel’s skill or might can come into question here, for angels cannot create heaven and earth, no, not even the least of the creatures. Much less is man able to do this. Therefore the builder of this house must be true God, who has the

²⁷**Zechariah 9:10-11.**

²⁸*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 288, 289.

actual power of the divine nature to create heaven and earth and even much better things than that; that is, He must be omnipotent God ...²⁹

Christ, then, is the Almighty God and the Son of David who restores the House of David and raises up His Holy Christian Church through His gracious reign of the Gospel.

Conclusion.

Jesus, then, is the Son of Jesse and David who raises up the House of David and His Church through His life, death, and resurrection for the sins of the House of David and indeed for the sins of all men, for all of us.

And the House of David, i.e. the Church, Christ raises up through His gracious reign of the Gospel. For through the Gospel, Our Gracious King and Savior forgives sins, creates and sustains saving faith, and, thereby, gives the life everlasting and the resurrection of the body.

Amen.

²⁹*Luther's Works*, Vol. 15, p. 282.