

# Second Sunday of Advent

## YOU CAN'T ALWAYS TELL A TREE BY ITS BRANCHES

**Isaiah 11:1-10**

### Second Sunday of Advent Analysis by Mark Marius

*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.*

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Stumped**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : Chopped Down**

This tree has been hacked. This tree of Jesse that once managed to produce a divine King and flourished in a prosperous Kingdom has been cut back ever since. It has been divided, abused and attacked. Its enemies have cut it down to size and virtually destroyed it, so now the only thing that remains is a stump. How did this happen? Could it be that the knowledge and fear of the LORD had been abandoned, forgotten, and misunderstood. A little bit of power can easily do that.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : Fearful**

Without the proper fear and knowledge of the LORD we are left to fear what we know about the world. This is no Eden. Danger exists all around. There are beasts that will kill and maim, strike and poison. There is enmity between people and creation. The poor and meek are forgotten. Wickedness runs rampant. People have forgotten the LORD and are now guided by what they see or hear from the world, and it's everyone for him- or herself.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : Judged**

We are judged by the powers that base their sentence on what they hear and what they see, and that is not according to the LORD's truth. The poor and meek have no chance. If we can't find

some power—economic, social, political, or religious then we don't stand a chance either. But even if we find enough power in this world, it is the LORD who wields the heaviest ax, because the LORD will judge us for not knowing and fearing HIM. So we are stumped no matter which way you cut it.

## **PROGNOSIS: Enlightened**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Righteousness***

But the LORD is not done with even the oldest of stumps, nor is the LORD done with us yet. God is sending new life from Jesse's stump. A new shoot that will change the world forever. Fear and knowledge of the LORD will be his delight. He will not be seeking righteousness but will be the LORD's righteousness. He will be our righteousness. Others will judge him by what they see and hear but not by the LORD's righteousness, so they will try to cut this new shoot down by nailing him to a dead tree. And dead he will become in this world because of what the powers of this world see and hear. But he will rise again according to the LORD's righteousness judgment and once again the shoot will be reestablished.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Fear Not***

When the LORD's righteousness prevails we no longer need to fear the danger of this world. We can act and move confidently because we are already deemed righteous by God. So when we trust and fear the LORD we need not fear anything else – not the lion or the adder, not the scary places of this world, not the corruption of power and governments. We see and hear differently. Not what our eyes and ears tell us but what our baptism, holy communion, and God's Word tells us. We have been given grace, forgiveness, love and hope.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Evergreen***

Trees are being placed in many homes this time of year, real trees, fake trees, cut trees, live trees. But we are to be the

trees that signal God's love, God's grace, God's righteousness given in forgiveness. And of course it is not ourselves that we represent but rather that original shoot of Jesse, Jesus—the LORD's righteousness. That is the evergreen we are now a part of. Which allows us to go to the adders den, the hole of the asp—places that most eyes and ears would steer clear of. And we cultivate evergreens. We let other stumps know that there is a new shoot waiting to grow from them and it will be glorious.