

Isaiah 11:1-10

¹ A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -- ³ and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴ 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. ⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. ⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷ The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. ⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. (NIV)

Matthew 3:1-12

¹ In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

⁴ John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ **Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.** ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ **"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.** ¹² **His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."** (NIV)

‘Repent’

TINA Young adult member of Redeemer Lutheran
SVEN Young adult member of Redeemer Lutheran

(Tina walks in to the room, sees the chair, sits down and opens a paper to read.)

(Josh walks into the room with a drink of water in a Styrofoam cup. Takes the last drink. Looks into the bottom of the cup. Then he throws it over his shoulder and sits down with a sports magazine.)

TINA: Sven! What are you doing?

SVEN: Huh?

TINA: You just threw your cup on the floor. This is a public place. Who’s going to pick up after your mess?! (Short pause) And, it was a styrofoam cup! That’s not bio degradable. How could you?

SVEN: (Looks up from his magazine) Huh? (Short Pause) O, the cup. Sure, sorry, Tina.

TINA: (Waits, watching Sven.) Sven (emphatically)! You just threw that cup on the floor!

SVEN: I said ‘I’m sorry!’ What do you want? (Goes back to reading the magazine.)

TINA: Well, Sven, do you *MEAN* it?

SVEN: Mean what?

TINA: Do you mean your sorry??!

SVEN: Sure! . . . I said it didn’t I?

TINA: Well, Sven, you say you’re sorry. But the cup is still on the floor!

SVEN: (sighing - hmmmph) Just can’t please some people, can you?

(Sit down for sermon)

INTRO - Have you decorated your home for Christmas? Have you put up your tree yet? Many have. In fact, for many there is a special decoration, or a special ornament which needs to be hung in order to make the preparation complete. How about you? Are you prepared for Christmas? Have you decorated?

I. How about your life? Have you decorated your life in preparation for, in preparation for Christ rather than for Christmas?

A. Preparation for God's coming is a constant theme in the Scriptures.

1. We hear this call in the old Testament, and New Testament.
2. We hear it from the prophets, and the angels.
3. Jesus himself calls for preparation for the coming of God.
4. Are you prepared?

B. During the next two week we will look at decorations for our lives, we will look at decorations which God calls for in preparation for His coming.

1. One of the ways that God calls us to prepare is repentance.
2. Repentance is Godly sorrow for sin.
3. Real repentance is not being sorry you got caught.
4. Real repentance is not just saying you are sorry, like Sven in our skit.
5. Real repentance is not feeling sorry, but doing nothing, again like Sven.

C. Real repentance is sincere sorrow for sin that leads to efforts to change our life.

1. God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus.
2. In tonight's Gospel lesson from Matthew, John reminds the people of his day, ⁸
Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
3. Don't just say you're sorry, **SHOW** it!
 - A. Don't just say you're sorry you littered, show it and pick up the trash. Even more, don't do it again.
 - B. Don't just say you're sorry you lied, show it. And work to keep from lying again.
 - C. Don't just say you're sorry you hurt another person, show it. And work to keep from hurting them again.

II. But that is easier said than done, isn't it?

- A. I don't know about you, sometimes when someone points out something I've done they think is wrong, I'm not so sorry I did it, as I am that they had to say something about it.
- B. At other times, I know I should be sorry, but I'm having trouble with that.
- C. Sometimes I want to change, but . . . well you know . . . change is **HARD!**
- D. Repentance is hard work!

III. But, let me share a couple of thoughts that might help you in preparing for Jesus, a couple of tips that might help you to repent.

A. John does this by reminding the Pharisees and Saducees who was calling them to repentance.

1. ¹¹ **"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will**

baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

2. It is one whose sandal John was not worthy to carry.
3. It is God himself who comes to this world as Jesus to cleanse us from our sin.
4. When God speaks, we should listen.

B. And, think what God did to forgive us of our sins.

1. Jesus suffered for our sins so we could be cleansed.
2. He came into the mud, to pull us out.
3. When I first came to Alaska I had some things to learn about driving and getting unstuck. One day my wife and I drove with our new baby and sick child Mary out to the end of a dirt road, and I drove off in our old Suburban and couldn't get out. Someone came along and got me out. I had a schedule to meet, but so did this person. He took time to help me, and I was really thankful.

Jesus has done so much more for us, shouldn't our thanks lead to wanting to serve Him.

C. And, Jesus did come to forgive us.

1. If I know I'll get in trouble if I admit my sin, I might be reluctant to confess.
2. But, if I know I will be forgiven, it is easier to confess.
3. Imagine then the Pharisees and Saducees being called to repentance, and instead acting in defiance, in a way that rejected John and Jesus.

CONCLUSION - Christmas is a wonderful time of year. It is good to celebrate the birth of the Savior. It is more important to receive the Savior. As we decorate our homes for Christmas, it is important that we prepare our lives for the Savior. God calls us to repent. Remember the words of John, **Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.**

(Tina and Sven reading their magazine and paper.)

SVEN: Tina?

TINA: (Angrily) What Sven?

SVEN: Tina . . . I really am sorry.

TINA: Hmmmph!

SVEN: Well, I think you have every right to be mad at me. It's been a long day, I just wanted to get away from work, from responsibility. I was out of it. . . But, I was wrong. And not just for littering, I was wrong for my attitude. I'm sorry Tina. I'll not only try not to litter, I'll try not to blow you off like that any more.

TINA: Wow! What brought that on.

SVEN: Well, in truth I was angry with you at first for pointing out my misdeed. My boss pointed out all sorts of mistakes I made today. I didn't need someone else doing that.

TINA: I'm sorry.

SVEN: No, Tina. He wasn't very kind. Maybe he was even critical beyond what he needed to be. But you were right, and I just didn't want to listen.

TINA: (Caring) O, Sven.

SVEN: Do you remember that reading and sermon on Sunday. The pastor talked on repentance, on John's words, **Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.**

TINA: He did, didn't he?

SVEN: You know what stuck me. He said that even though the Pharisees rejected Him, Jesus came for them too. He was sad that they rejected him. . . I don't want to make Jesus sad. After all, he came as a child at Christmas to save me. I want to love and serve him.

TINA: Wow, Sven, I don't know that I ever heard you act so maturely.

SVEN: Tina?

TINA: What, Sven?

SVEN: (Hand to mouth . . . Whispering loudly so everyone can hear.) Tina, don't tell anybody. Chuckling. I've got a reputation to uphold.

TINA: Gets up from her seat and goes and gives Sven a hug) Ok, Sven. I won't tell anyone. (Pause) But, Sven, your *ACTIONS* will tell everyone that God is working in your life.