

The Stump of Jesse

Isaiah 10-12

WHAT WE FOUND

First, a theology of empires in one question: “*Shall the axe vaunt itself over him who hews with it?*” (10:15). Assyria, the superpower of the age, is in God’s accounting a hand tool, and when the tool claims to be the craftsman, the tool gets retired. The forest of Lebanon falls (10:33-34), and against that skyline of felled giants rises one green twig: “*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse*” (11:1). And the seed from Session 2 sprouted: *the holy seed is its stump* (6:13). The stump was never wreckage; it was a seed vault. Empires fall like forests and stay down; God’s people fall and sprout.

On the shoot rests the sevenfold Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety, and fear of the LORD. We were honest about the history: the Hebrew lists six, and the Church’s ancient Greek and Latin Bibles rendered the doubled *fear of the LORD* as two gifts, giving the traditional seven the bishop prayed over you at Confirmation (CCC 1831 cites Isaiah 11:1-2 by name). The gifts belong first to the Messiah; Confirmation is being fitted with *his* equipment. We watched the resting become visible at the Jordan, where the Spirit descended “*and remained on him*” (John 1:32-33; CCC 536).

We also faced the most serious objection with full respect: the world is manifestly not at peace, so how can Messiah have come? Read with the Church, the chapter answers in layers: verse 1 is a small historical event, a shoot in time; verses 6-9 are creation-wide consummation still ahead; and verse 10 gives a checkable middle criterion that has, astonishingly, happened: the root of Jesse raised as an ensign and *the nations* seeking him, which Paul quotes as Isaiah’s promise now opened to the nations (Romans 15:12), and which a room of Gentiles studying Jesse’s family tree quietly proves. The kingdom is already inaugurated, not yet consummated (CCC 671-674), which is why the Church never stops praying *thy kingdom come*.

And we sang. Chapter 12, the book’s first pure hymn of praise, hides a name in plain sight: “*he has become my salvation*,” Hebrew *yeshuah*, sharing its root, y-sh-‘, with the name *Yeshua*, Jesus, *the LORD saves* (Matthew 1:21). With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation, and great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Jerome • *Commentary on Isaiah, on 11:1*

Reading the Latin, *a rod (virga) from the root of Jesse*, St. Jerome hears the Virgin (*virgo*) in the very sound of the word: the rod from Jesse’s root is the Virgin Mary, and the flower that rises from it is Christ. The dynasty reborn from Jesse’s stump comes into the world through a daughter of that house.

St. Gregory the Great • *Moralia on Job*

St. Gregory arranges the seven gifts as a ladder: the Spirit’s list descends from wisdom to fear of the LORD, because that is how heaven comes down to us; but the soul climbs it upward, beginning at

holy fear and rising step by step to wisdom, the taste of God himself. The gifts are not a trophy case; they are a staircase.

St. Cyril of Alexandria • *Commentary on Isaiah, on 11:10*

On the root of Jesse raised as an ensign, St. Cyril sees the standard around which a scattered world at last rallies: Christ lifted up, drawing not one nation but the nations into one army of peace. What Isaiah promised for peoples far off, Cyril reads as the daily fact of the Church.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray Gregory's ladder: one gift per day for seven days, starting at fear of the LORD and climbing to wisdom. One sentence each morning: *Come, Holy Spirit, Spirit of ____, rest on me.*
- If you have not thought about your Confirmation since it happened, tell the Lord so plainly, and ask him to stir up what was sealed. If you have not been confirmed, talk to your leader this week; the gifts have your name on them.
- Read Isaiah 12 aloud once, alone, as your own prayer, and when you reach *he has become my yeshuah*, say the Name.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him."

Isaiah 11:1-2 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Isaiah 22:15-25. Bring your questions; it may be the most surprising night of the study.

Catechism References From This Session

CCC 1831 • CCC 536 • CCC 712 • CCC 671-674