



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Advent 2 (A)**  
**December 7, 2025**

**RCL: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12**

### **Opening Prayer |**

Merciful God, who sent your messengers to the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Context |**

Isaiah 11: 1-10 is born from devastation. Jerusalem's power has splintered; kings have failed; empires press in on every side. The mighty "tree" of David's line looks hacked to the ground. But Isaiah stands in the ruins and dares to imagine life breaking through the dead wood: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse."

The prophet's image is one of holy resistance. It declares that God's Spirit does not abandon the marginalized, even when history seems to have closed the book. The promise will not rise from the palaces of power but from the roots: from the forgotten soil of the people. Jesse, not David, is named, to remind readers that God's renewal often begins among those the world deems small.

The vision of renewal expands until the entire creation is caught up in the restoration. The wolf and the lamb share pasture; the child plays unafraid; the earth fills with the knowledge of God. This is no timid peace. It is revolutionary wholeness where the hierarchies of harm collapse and all creation breathes freely again.

For us Christians observing Advent, Isaiah's vision stretches across time. It recalls how God's Spirit rested on the child of Mary and it calls the present church to stand in Isaiah's posture: looking at cut-down systems and proclaiming, "Life will rise here." Advent hope, then, is not escapist; it is insurgent faith in a God who grows liberation from stumps.

### **Theological Reflection |**

Isaiah 11:1-10 sings the song of *holy reversal*. Where the world sees endings, God plants beginnings. The image of the "shoot from the stump" is a declaration that God sides with the broken ground. In every

generation, this text invites the faithful to believe that the Spirit's movement begins in unlikely places—among the poor, the exiled, the weary, and those whom empire overlooks.

The Spirit's gifts in verses 2-3—wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and reverent awe—form the spiritual DNA of a new kind of leadership. This ruler's authority flows not from dominance but from discernment; not from fear but from faithfulness. Such leadership reverses the logic of empire. It listens before it legislates. It uplifts before it punishes. It seeks the liberation of the lowly rather than the comfort of the powerful.

When Isaiah proclaims that “with righteousness he shall judge the poor,” the text offers a portrait of divine justice that liberates rather than condemns. Righteousness here means right relationship: the healing of what oppression has torn apart. This is the justice that Mary will echo generations later in her Magnificat, when she speaks of the proud scattered, the humble lifted, the hungry filled. The season of Advent teaches us how God's justice takes flesh, speaks truth, and rearranges the moral landscape.

Isaiah's closing imagery of natural harmony—wolf with lamb, lion with ox, child at play—depicts creation itself rejoicing in freedom. This is not the silence of submission; it is the peace that follows justice. Predators and prey do not cease to exist; rather, their coexistence is re-ordered by love. Such a vision invites humanity to imagine economies and communities where none must devour another to survive. For communities still living under the weight of racism, war, poverty, or ecological despair, Isaiah offers a promise that God's dream cannot be cut down. Every act of kindness, every protest for dignity, every planting of a tree or feeding of a neighbor becomes a sacrament of that coming peace.

The church prepares for Christ's coming by becoming the community Isaiah describes: a people upon whom the Spirit rests, a people who live out wisdom and courage in the struggle for justice. The celebration lies not only in what God will do someday, but in what God is already doing through those who refuse to give up on the dream.

## Reflection Questions |

- Where in the world do you see “stumps”—places cut down by violence, greed, or despair? What shoots of new life do you notice emerging there?
- Isaiah envisions a form of leadership grounded in wisdom and empathy. How might our churches, schools, or governments embody that Spirit-filled leadership today?
- The peaceable kingdom challenges systems built on competition and fear. What personal habits or community structures in your life need to be transformed for such peace to grow?

## Faith in Practice |

Plant something—literally or figuratively—this week. Put a seed in soil, begin reconciliation, or start a justice initiative that nurtures life where others see only dead stumps. Pray daily, “*Spirit of the Lord, rest on me,*” and notice where new growth appears. Let each act of hope be a celebration of the God who still brings shoots from the ground and peace from the rubble.

***The Reverend Deacon Quincy Hall** is a transitional deacon and candidate for the priesthood in the Diocese of Alabama, discerning a call to parish ministry. He is currently completing a Master of Divinity at Bexley Seabury Episcopal Seminary in Chicago. He holds a B.S. in Sociology and an M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of Montevallo and is a proud alumni brother of Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity. Outside his professional and ministerial work, he finds joy in making music, traveling, and being with his people.*



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