

SCRIPTURE READING FOR DECEMBER 4, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Isaiah is known as one of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets. The book bearing his name was composed before, during and after the defeat of Judah by the imperial powers of Assyria and Babylon between 740 BCE and 686 BCE. Remember that the prophets wrote in poetry, not prose, so their words are thick with metaphor and imagery.

Our reading today is read during Advent, pointing to the promised Messiah to come and deliver the people of God from oppression and injustice. It's also used in traditional church liturgy (v 2) in the prayer over a child after baptism.

the stump of Jesse :: this expression Jesse alludes to the Davidic dynasty, believed to be the arbiters of God's goodness throughout the generations. Jesse was the father of King David. Jesse was the son of Ohed, and the grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

fear of the Lord :: the Hebrew word is ירא or yara which means fear, terror, awe; used to imply deep reverence, respect, wonder, and awe in particular in respect to God.

On that day :: refers to the Day of the Lord [יּוֹם יְהוָה or "Yom Yahweh"]—the common Hebrew expression for what we call the coming of the Lord, the Apocalypse, or the end of time – when God rights all the injustices of the world and brings the kingdom of God into the earth. The expression indicates that we're talking in apocalyptic or eschatological time and tone...poetry as opposed to non-fiction reporting of observed facts.

Luke is one of the four gospels. Gospel means good news, it's the title given to the four books in the Bible that tell the life, actions, and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Our reading is similar to the announcement that Mary's coupling with Elizabeth will also have a child – even in her old age – recounted in Luke 1:5-25. The "sixth month" refers to her pregnancy.

Jesus:: is a masculine given name derived from Iēsous (Ἰησοῦς; Jesus in Classical Latin) the Ancient Greek form of the Hebrew and Aramaic name Yeshua or Y'shua (Hebrew: ישוע). It's etymologically related to another biblical name, Joshua. There are various proposals as to the literal etymological meaning of the name Yəhōšua' (Joshua, Hebrew: יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), including Yahweh saves; or Yahweh (is) salvation; or Yahweh (is) my help.

Isaiah 11:1-10

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹ A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,

and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

² The 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.

³ His 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,

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor

and decide with equity for the oppressed 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.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist

and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,

and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

⁹ They 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.

¹⁰ On 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.

²⁶ **In the sixth month** the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a *virgin* engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The *virgin's* name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! **THE LORD IS WITH YOU.**" ²⁹ But she was much *perplexed* by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be *afraid*, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him *Jesus*. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a *virgin*?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will **OVERSHADOW** you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the **sixth month** for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "**HERE AM I**, the **SERVANT** of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- How do these texts touch what you're living, celebrating and struggling with today?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

perplexed :: the Greek word διαταράχθη or *dietarachthē* (from /dia/ and /tarasso/), often translated as "perplexed," could also mean "disturbed," "agitated," or "deeply troubled." How do these meanings help you to imagine Mary's initial reaction to the angel? What, exactly, is she afraid of or troubled by?

afraid :: the Greek word φόβος or /phobos/ (*like phobia*), means "fear." However, in Isaiah 11:2, the Hebrew word, ירא or /yara/, is used to imply deep reverence and awe. What is the relationship between fear and wonder? How do we decipher what types of fear are generative and what types of fear are destructive?

virgin:: in 27 the Greek word is παρθένος pronounced /parthenos/ means a young, unmarried girl (maiden), beyond puberty but not yet married. The word carries the implication of virginity in particular, in relationship to the probable allusion to Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman [עַלְמָה] is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel." עַלְמָה in Hebrew pronounced /almah/ means a young woman, a virgin. Many Hebrew scholars assert that the word "almah" really means "young woman," not virgin, which in Hebrew would be בְּתוּלָה pronounced /bathulah/ to refer specifically to a virgin, as well as the idea of virginity בְּתוּלִים pronounced /betulim/. In v. 34 the literal wording of the phrase is "How will be this since a man not I know?" Know or γινώσκω in Greek & Hebrew is used to refer both to mental knowledge as well as body-knowledge, and by extension sexual intercourse.

THE LORD IS WITH YOU :: This is a greeting used repeatedly in the First Testament, meant more as a statement rather than a wish. It prepares the recipient for divine service with the assurance that The LORD will help you. See Judges 6:12 and Ruth 2:14.

OVERSHADOW:: ἐπισκιάζω pronounced /episkiazó/ it means to cover, overshadow (cast a shadow). It's used in the Hebrew Scriptures to describe God's presence resting on the tabernacle in the cloud metaphorically protecting his people. (See Exodus 40:35; Psalm 91:4; 90:4 and 140:7.)

HERE AM I :: This is an expression of the humble acceptance of the will of God used repeatedly in the Bible. **SERVANT** in Greek δοῦλος pronounced /doulos/ means slave, servant, someone who belongs to another. It's used of Jesus in the hymn Philippians 2:5-11: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a **SLAVE**, assuming human likeness... becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross."