

## The First Sunday after Christmas

Hymns: 92, 645, 98, 93

The INTROIT

(Ps.93:1,2,5)

Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever. Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting. The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty: The Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself. Hallelujah!

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, direct our actions according to Thy good pleasure, that in the name of Thy beloved Son we may be made to abound in good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 11:1-5

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.45:1,2; 93:1a)

P:/C: Thou art fairer than the children of men: **grace is poured into Thy lips.**

P:/C: My heart is inditing a good matter, I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: **my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

P:/C: The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty: **the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself. Hallelujah!**

The EPISTLE

Galatians 4:1-7 (NKJV)

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Psalm 96:11; 98:2)

P:/C: Hallelujah! Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad before the Lord: **for He hath made known His salvation. Hallelujah!**

And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

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Isaiah 11:1-5 — “And There Shall Come Forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse”

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Hymns: 92, 645, 98, 93

Isaiah 11:1-5 — “And There Shall Come Forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Today is the First Sunday after Christmas, and the appointed reading of the Old Testament is Isaiah 11:1-5:

**And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### INTRODUCTION

“**How are you doing?**” This is a common greeting. Usually it is shortened to “**How are you?**” Sadly, very few people who use this greeting actually care to hear the answer. Usually the person says it and continues walking, barely even making eye contact with the person to whom the greeting is offered. “**How are you?**” is often offered as nothing more than a show of passing politeness.

Today’s text goes way beyond a greeting of passing politeness. The words of our text speak directly to who we are and addresses our condition in the world. The words of our text are given for those who are feeling their weakness and their powerlessness and their smallness in the world. The poor and the meek are those who are ignored by society and counted as unimportant. Nothing good or big is expected of the poor and the meek. But today we hear of one who does not judge by what he sees with his eyes or hears with his ears. He knows far more than can be perceived with the eyes or discerned with the ears. In fact this one comes to the world to accomplish the greatest things ever accomplished, and he comes from the very meekest of families and peoples. Yet through Him the meek are made great and the poor are blessed with every blessing. In connection with this one we have hope beyond what we can see with our eyes and hear with our ears.

I. AND THERE SHALL COME FORTH A ROD OUT OF THE STEM OF JESSE

**And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.**

Who is Jesse? What did Jesse accomplish among the people of Israel that he should be mentioned? What great acts did Jesse perform? What mighty enemies did Jesse defeat? What great possessions did Jesse acquire? What magnificent buildings did Jesse erect? What large city did Jesse rule? Jesse is not known for any of these things. Jesse was a shepherd and farmer of the little village of Bethlehem. Bethlehem itself was known for very little and was itself one of the smaller villages in Judah. Yet, the LORD declares through His servant Isaiah, **“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”**

Now David, Jesse’s son, is well known. He was anointed as king over Israel. David defeated Goliath. David defeated the Philistines. David defeated all of the enemies that rose up against Israel. David provided for the building of the temple. David is known as the greatest of the kings of Israel.

Yet Isaiah does not speak of David. Isaiah speaks of the rod or little twig that would come forth from the stem or stump of Jesse. Isaiah speaks of the little branch or shoot that would come up from the root of Jesse, the root long forgotten, the root buried and hidden for many years. The great kingdom of David has fallen. It has been overtaken by invaders. Now the Romans rule with a mighty hand. Now the people of Israel are an oppressed people, whose own king is a puppet king set up by the Romans, not even of the Hebrews. A wicked king who cared nothing for the people now ruled. No, the once mighty kingdom of David appears as nothing now, nothing more than the kingdom of Jesse would have been counted.

Who in this world ever really cares about the meek and the poor? Politicians love to talk about caring for such people. It makes for good election propaganda. It also allows them to raise taxes, which bring the nation even lower and brings the meek and the poor to even worse conditions. But it makes them look like they care and it makes their words sound right and good. But appearances are often deceiving and the words of men are full of lies and false promises.

Into this wicked world of false hope and deception the LORD promises to send true hope and promises to raise up a new beginning from the meekness and lowliness of Jesse. From a man whom the world does not know and whom society does not recognize, from a man whom the earthly powers have completely forgotten, the LORD promises to bring forth a little twig of hope and a little sprout of renewed life and goodness.

## II. AND THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD SHALL REST UPON HIM

**And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD.**

From the stump and root of Jesse, a man whom the world would not know and whom the powerful and rich of the world would count as nothing would be brought forth. Yet this meek and poor man would be unlike any other man ever born of woman. This man would be full of wisdom and understanding. This man would know what is and what has been and what shall be. This man would know all things. This man would be filled with true knowledge from which flows true fear or worship of the LORD. Upon this man the very Spirit of the LORD would rest.

Everything that this man would do would be in accord with the Spirit of the LORD, because the Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him. What does this mean, that the Spirit of the LORD rests upon Him? Moreover, why is this important?

The importance is revealed at His baptism. Jesus came to John to be baptized into His ministry of preaching and teaching and healing and ultimately of salvation. At His baptism the heavens were torn open and the Father spoke and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and rested upon Him. The Father spoke saying, **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”** (Matt 3:17)

Jesus is the very Son of God, the Word of God through whom all things are created and have their being. He is also the Son of Man, according to the root of Jesse, Mary. The blessed union of God in the flesh means that according to His very being, the Holy Spirit is present, because the three persons of the Holy Trinity are one. Yet according to His office of the Christ, that is, the anointed one, the Holy Spirit had to make the office of salvation manifest. The work that Jesus came to do for us is God’s work. We need the confirmation of the Holy Spirit upon the works of Jesus so that we may believe. The very title of Messiah or Christ requires this outward confirmation of the Holy Spirit. Moses performed mighty works of God, too, as did other prophets. But Moses was not the Christ. Elijah was not the Christ. John the Baptist was not the Christ. They all worked and preached and did mighty things by the power of the Spirit, but the works of Jesus were not done in the same way. His works were done by the one who is Immanuel, *with us God*. This man was anointed with the Holy Spirit in the fullness of the permanent resting of the Spirit upon Him.

This man, Jesus, did not merely do the will of God. This man, Jesus, is God in the flesh. Jesus did not need to inquire of God what to do. Jesus did not need to receive power from God to do what was to be done. When He spoke and when He preached and when He gave a command He did not need to say, **“Thus sayeth the LORD.”** He simply said it and preached it and commanded it. The demons recognized Him and had no choice but to obey. At His command death fled and the dead were raised to life. At His touch the blind were healed and the deaf received their hearing and the lame rose up to walk. At His utterance the lepers were restored and all diseases vanished. At His command the wind and the waves became calm. Yet even though He Himself is God in the flesh, He did not do these things until the Holy Spirit rested upon Him. For our sake it was necessary that the Spirit of the LORD rest upon Him. It was necessary for us that we should know who it is that does these things for us.

The works alone were not enough. After all, these were all temporal works. Those whom Jesus raised died again. All who were healed eventually died. These works were not the primary works for which the Christ was born. The primary works were the works that were concluded in the suffering and death on the cross. These were the works that completed our salvation. These were the works for which we truly need the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. All of the rest of the ministry of Jesus was preparatory for this fulfillment of all righteousness. All these temporal works were to assure us of the true identity of the one who was crucified for us. This is what Peter preached to the multitudes at Pentecost. This is what cut them to their hearts and converted them so that the repentance of the Holy Spirit moved them to cry out to the apostles for the saving sacrament of Baptism. For Jesus came to the world not merely to give us better lives, but to restore us to Life. And it is through the activity of the Holy Spirit that we are converted to know Jesus as the Life of the world.

### III. BUT WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL HE JUDGE

**. . . and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.**

This one on whom the Holy Spirit came to rest does not look upon us like we do. He does not hear us as we hear ourselves and as we hear one another. He does not look upon the poor and judge them as less valuable. He does not look upon the meek and judge them as less important. Rather, He judges the poor with righteousness and reproves with equity for the meek.

This is amazing! It is truly amazing! Are the poor more righteous than the rich? Are the lowly more faithful than the great? No, this is not what is meant at all. Rather, in righteousness he shall judge the poor. In equity He shall reprove the meek. He does not come to seek righteousness and equity but to grant it. He is the righteousness that we poor sinners need. He is the equity which we cannot find for ourselves. When the Holy Spirit converts us so that we recognize our poor and sinful condition, so that we do not think ourselves mighty and strong and able to get by on our own, so that we stop imagining that we are righteous or good or fair in what we think and say and do, then we hear the LORD's reproof and we receive from Him the righteousness that He purchased with His own life blood. Then the rod of His mouth smites us and the breath or spirit of His mouth slays our self-reliant will so that we look to Him and receive His life-giving Gospel.

He comes to us with the girdle of righteousness around His loins and the girdle of faithfulness around His kidneys. Perhaps to better understand this we should jump forward to the night of the New Testament and hear what Jesus did.

**Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. (John 13:3-5)**

The Lord Jesus, the righteous branch of Jesse, took off His clothes and put on a towel for a girdle and began to wash the feet of His disciples and to use the towel to wipe them dry and clean. He took His clean towel with which He was girded and took the dirt that had been collected by the daily walk of His disciples. Whatever of the world that clung to His disciples from the places that they had chosen to go, Jesus wiped away with His own righteousness and faithfulness.

This is what Jesus does for us. Moreover, this is what He says that we should do for one another. First we baptize one another into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But then we gather into this name of righteousness and we kneel together, confessing all of the ways that we have gone astray and have dirtied our feet. We hear together the words of absolution and rise up together to confess the Creed and to hear the exposition of the Gospel and then to eat and drink the righteousness and faithfulness of the LORD. The LORD comes to us with His righteousness and faithfulness and cleanses us and feeds us and nourishes us for our daily lives. This is the judgment with which He comes to judge us poor sinners who are weakened by

our sins and who humbly come to Him according to His merciful call through the Gospel. This is the equity with which He reproves us, raising us up to His level by taking from us the sins that bring us low and feeding us His body of unity and His blood of forgiveness and renewal so that we are strong to stand with Him in His glory.

#### CONCLUSION

So then, dear baptized saint of God, how are you doing? Do you face things in your life that make you feel poor and weak? Do you face challenges that you do not know how to surmount? Do your sins weigh upon you? From the stump of Jesse a rod has been brought forth and from the root of Jesse a branch has grown. His kingdom is from everlasting and has been manifested even unto us in our time. He comes to us today even as He came through the virgin Mary, in flesh and blood, girded with righteousness and faithfulness. He comes to us to feed us and to strengthen us in our weakness and neediness. He has been confirmed by the Holy Spirit. He has pronounced His judgment upon you, and that judgment is that you are declared to be righteous with His righteousness and you have been declared to be faithful with His faithfulness. The Holy Spirit that rested upon Him has been given to you in your baptism. He now lives in you and confirms you in the one true faith by which you know the righteous and faithful judgment with which the LORD has judged you. Come to His table in His worthiness and receive the strength and renewal in His forgiveness and life, given and shed for you for your daily living. The LORD is come. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.