

“Your Leader Who Takes Care of You”
(Isaiah 11:2)
Second Sunday in Advent, December 8th, 2013
Pastor Espinosa

The text: “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 the fear of the Lord.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. We go the way of our leaders. That’s why they are so important. Many want to be leaders, but they oftentimes don’t know what they are getting themselves into. To be a leader is to have a big bulls-eye on your chest, a big “X” on your back. Leaders are criticized and sometimes condemned. They are in the public eye. If you want to live a quiet life, being a leader will make that goal much more difficult. But if one is a leader they *ought* to be scrutinized and evaluated, because there is simply too much at stake not to care about how their leadership is going. Everyone associated with that leadership is -- after all -- affected and impacted by it.

This is readily apparent in the realm of sports. Several weeks ago the star quarterback of the Green Bay Packers – Aaron Rogers – was injured and has been forced to sit out. The team has been drastically affected by the loss of their leader. With Rogers the Packers had won four out of their first six games, without Rogers the Packers are 0-4-1, no wins, four losses and one tie.

But this is a simple example of the importance of leaders, the more complicated ones are represented in those who have served as presidents of the United States of America. I am personally in awe of Lincoln’s legacy. I can’t imagine what it was like to be president at a time when our nation was at civil war, brother fighting against brother. Furthermore, Lincoln stood for what was tremendously unpopular while facing resistance from every angle, but this did not hinder him from his executive order, the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st, 1863. I basically feel sorry for every president that has followed Lincoln. How does one possibly begin to compare? And again it is easy to criticize even when we Christians are commanded by the Lord to pray for our leaders (1st Timothy 2:1-2). But the point is that people are directly impacted by their leaders.

The people of our nation had *reason* to question the integrity of the office after Nixon; U.S. citizens had *reason* to feel discouraged during the 1973 oil crisis as Carter seemed paralyzed, even Reagan seemed like he was in a no-win situation in the Iran-Contra affair,

George Bush 41 probably wishes he could take back his “read my lips” on taxes, Bill Clinton was recently asked in an interview how important moral fortitude is for a president, if he could do it again, George Bush 43 would probably reconsider his timing for declaring “mission accomplished,” and Barack Obama had to recently apologize to the nation for some Americans who are losing their current health insurance plans in light of the Affordable Health Care Act (this after he had promised that no one would have to give up their plans). Don’t get me wrong, I can’t begin to imagine the weight of bearing the presidency. It is one of the easiest things in the world to criticize the leader of a country, esp. the leader of the most powerful nation on the planet. Be that as it may, it doesn’t change this axiomatic principle: people are directly impacted by their leaders.

Proverbs 11:14 says, ***“Where there is no guidance, a people falls...”*** We need our leaders to provide proper guidance. Proverbs 14:34 states, ***“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”*** A leader’s righteousness is only a boon for the people, but his sin is their shame. Proverbs 29:4 says, ***“By justice a king builds up the land, but he who exacts gifts tears it down.”*** And thus we ask about the integrity of leaders: do they lead to build up those they serve or do they lead in order to profit themselves?

But there is an inverse dynamic to what I’ve been describing: while it is true that leaders directly impact the people they lead, it is also true that leaders often simply reflect the state of the people themselves. From a Christian worldview, our current president has one of the most liberal platforms in the history of our nation, but we would be remiss to ignore that he is in fact a reflection of our country and our current moral compass. In other words, before we condemn our leaders, we might want to take some time to look in the mirror. Do we really want righteous leaders? Do we really want good leaders? Or do we want leaders who will serve our sinful ambitions and our rebellion towards God? What kinds of leaders do we really desire? That question is answered by answering first what we just really desire to begin with.

This was the case with the people of Israel. One of the most shameful and stunning scenes in the entire Old Testament was the day that the people of Israel decided that God’s leadership wasn’t good enough for them and said that they wanted another leader instead!

1st Samuel 8:1 & 4-7: *“When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel....⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah⁵ and said to him, ‘Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.⁶But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed to the Lord.⁷And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in*

*all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, **but they have rejected me from being king over them.***

Yes, it is so easy to criticize a leader and in our sinful nature, we are the ones who are always criticizing God. Last Wednesday night we focused on Isaiah 11:1 and we learned that it is in righteous judgment that the Lord cuts down the proud and rebellious trees. Stumps and stump-language in the Bible symbolizes the desolation and humiliation that comes from forsaking the Lord. This is what we do in our sin: we forsake His Word, and part and parcel of this rebellion against God is that we are God's supreme critics. Over the years, these are the top complaints I've heard from those who confess the Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, these ought not to be, but they are:

1. Why does God command me to forgive that person when they have so openly sinned and done such evil to me?
2. Why does God command me to honor a marriage that has lost its love?
3. Why does God command me to trust in Him when all my life I have and yet He has allowed me to suffer?

And this of course is but a very short list, but inherent in these questions are bold criticisms against the Lord. We complain against our leaders -- this is true -- but we really complain against our most important Leader. We are like the Israelites who asked Samuel to give them another king. There is a reminiscent scene in the New Testament. Jesus had just finished teaching His bread of life discourse and in response to the words of the Lord, the Word records:

John 6:60 & 66: ***"When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?'....⁶⁶After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him."***

And in our sin, we are like those disciples who forsook Christ and it is in relationship to many of the teachings in God's Word. But to the modern church today it is as nothing to pick and choose which teachings we'll go with and which ones just seem too hard...too unreasonable. Perhaps the most important example of this is in respect to The Lord's Supper. You must choose Christian: is it or isn't it the very body and very blood of Christ. If it is, then we should be knocking the doors down every Sunday to receive it; if it isn't, then hey it doesn't matter, take it or leave it. Like the rest of the world, it is easy to say, "This is hard saying; who can listen to it?" In this, we criticize our Leader Christ: "Come on! Is it *really* your body and blood?" And we wonder why we lack spiritual strength!

It was like this in the time of Isaiah. Isaiah 1:1 says, *“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”* Let’s take inventory of these leaders which the people chose over and above God: 2nd Chronicles 26:16 says, ***“But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God....”***; 2nd Chronicles 27 records that Jotham was a good king (v 2a), but then there is this commentary of the people themselves: ***“The people, however, continued their corrupt practices (v 2b).”*** So in response to the hearts of the people the Lord permitted Ahaz to be king and the word says at 2nd Chronicles 28:2: ***“He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and also made cast idols for worshiping the Baals.”*** And finally, Isaiah also served during the reign of Hezekiah. Now Hezekiah led a great renewal in the land, but with the exception of Josiah after him, the other kings who followed him were evil. Eventually Jerusalem was destroyed. They became a hopeless stump. It would be easy to end the story with, “they got what they deserved,” but this is not how God ends the story.

The best leaders stay with their ship so to speak no matter what. One of the most painful moments in the life of a parent who is God’s chosen leader for a family is when – and it happens more often than we think – a child says something to the parent that is very painful. Once upon a time a teen-aged daughter came downstairs to get into her friend’s car for a night out. When her mother saw what she was wearing, the mother said, “Not dressed like that.” The daughter immediately began to plead with her mother (after all, her friends were dressed the same way and *their* parents had no problem with it). A mother’s love knows sympathy and there was a part of the mom that thought about just letting it go, but she held to her position knowing that she did not want her daughter to join the cultural throng. She said no. The daughter started crying and ran upstairs. Such scenes are taxing and the mother could feel her body tremble. Her daughter then came down for round 2. This time the tact was “why don’t you trust me?” They went round and round – all the while the friends were waiting outside – and the mother in all conviction and in a love that her daughter could not understand, stood her ground and said, “Absolutely not!” This time though, the daughter didn’t hold back. What came roaring back to the mom was, “I hate you!” as she once again ran up the stairs. This time the mother was left bending over the kitchen counter, hands clasped in prayer with her tears of her own praying, “Please Lord help me and my daughter.” And here came the daughter down again – round 3 – but this time directly into a hug. Her daughter knew: her mother loved her enough to fight for her. Her mom was a true leader.

Jesus looked at Judah and He looks at you. He knows that He’s been rejected, but this does not cause Him to shrivel up or run away. Instead He stays and He becomes the Leader we need; He remains the Leader who saves. Isaiah 11:2 describes the kind of Leader you have and on account of *this* leader you are saved. This leader has the special bestowal of the Spirit of God

and when the Spirit is said to “rest” on a Leader this way, the wording is used to indicate that the work of the Spirit in this leader’s life is truly extraordinary and no one will be able to miss the demonstration of power. It is undeniable. From this passage we hear of the seven gifts of the Spirit or the seven spirits. The number appears to actually be six in the Hebrew, but the Greek translation of the Old Testament as well as church fathers like Augustine, Ambrose and Bede (*Ancient Christian Commentary: Old Testament X: Isaiah 1-39: 92, 97, 99 & 100*) list seven gifts (they added the virtue piety or godliness). The description is the basis for the seven-lighted candlestick with three pairs of arms proceeding from it. The candlestick design is still appropriate, because even from the original Hebrew, the main shaft represents the Spirit Himself and the three arms/three pairs represent the six gifts which stream from the Spirit.



They are extremely meaningful, because they teach you how much Jesus loves you and how He saves you. He has supplied your life with His leadership that is saving for you now and for eternity. The first pair of gifts are wisdom and understanding. These are the power to discern the nature of things through their appearance and these discern what must be done to properly lead. When we think we have it all figured out according to what we see, Jesus saves us by seeing for us what we cannot see. Our call is to simply trust in Him because His discernment is perfect! The second pair of gifts are counsel and might. When you have the first pair, the execution of leadership demonstrates amazing counsel and amazing effectiveness. You may remember the story of the two women who came before Solomon both claiming the same baby. Solomon had wisdom and understanding to see through what was happening and then he demonstrated with counsel and might a solution:

1st Kings 3:24-27: ***“And the king said, ‘Bring me a sword.’ So a sword was brought before the king. ²⁵And the king said, ‘Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to***

the other.’²⁶Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, ‘Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.’....²⁷Then the king answered and said, ‘Give the living child to the first woman [who begged for his life], and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.”

Jesus did this for you. With wisdom and understanding He discerned the only way to save you: His life for yours and then with counsel and might: He lived for you, died for you, and rose for you. He has been and is and will always be your perfect Leader, wise to save, with the understanding of how to save; with the counsel to guide His path to save and with the might to save: His powerful blood covering your sin; His mighty resurrection conquering death!

That leaves the last pair: your Leader, the King of Kings, is endowed eternally and without limit knowledge and the fear of the Lord. This pair is different. This pair points to His perfect relationship with the Heavenly Father: Jesus is completely and utterly faithful. He won’t change; He won’t falter; and He is 100% reliable. He will always be faithful. He will never stop praying for you while you are here going through life; and He will never stop loving you. He is the Leader you once rejected, but now that you have been born again, He is the leader you now love back; He is the Leader who has given you the Spirit who rests on Him; He is the Leader who invites you to His table; He is the Leader who will never let you go.