

Sunday, December 4, 2022 – Second Sunday of Advent

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

1 - A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

One theory for the source of the name "Nazareth" is that it is based upon one of the Hebrew words for "branch" – "ne-ser."

The one who grew up in Nazareth is the one who brings new hope and new life when everything looks hopeless and cut down.

When in your life did things look most hopeless and cut down?

How did God give you new hope and new life in that situation?

Is there a situation in your life right now where everything looks hopeless and cut down?

What is the source of that hope?

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.

Cf. Isaiah 61: 1-2 – The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Selected and read by Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth

Luke 4: 21 – "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

In the next verses we read again of the longing for the king who will reign with righteousness and bring justice (expressed in Jeremiah 23 – the First Reading for November 20), the longing for peace (expressed in Isaiah 2 – the First Reading for November 27), and the nations' being drawn to the God of the Hebrew faith (also in Isaiah 2).

4 - With righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek 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 and the fatling 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.

Second Reading: Romans 15:4-13

4 - Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

How do the steadfastness of the Lord and the encouragement of the scriptures give you hope?

What passages in the Bible are especially encouraging and hope-giving for you?

5 - May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus.

What is the connection between God's steadfastness and encouragement?

How do God's steadfastness and encouragement (mentioned twice in the span of two verses) help you live in harmony even with difficult people?

Who are the people that you especially need God's steadfastness and encouragement to help you live in harmony with?

7 - Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

8-9 - Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written (*followed by four quotes from the Old Testament*).

Paul is urging the Jewish Christians to welcome the Gentiles, whom God has welcomed.

Cf. Peter in Acts 10: 47 - "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

Whom do you especially need to reach out to and welcome?

13 - May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God of hope - all joy and peace in believing - abound in hope - the power of the Holy Spirit

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

1-3 - In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

5-6 - Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7-8 - When he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

Cf. my response to confirmation student

9-10 - "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 - "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

What is the significance of baptizing with water?

What is the significance of baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire?