

Pastoral REFLECTIONS

December 3, 2023

Dive Into History

Christmas is a special time for Christ worldwide:

- During the early days of Christianity, different parts of the world celebrated Christmas on different dates. If you traveled widely in the Roman world, you could conceivably enjoy six different Christmases in a single year. In the mid-fourth century, Pope Julius I appointed a monk named Dionysius to set up a calendar standardizing a universal date, which came to be December 25.

- Christmas was outlawed in England by the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), who thought of it as a “heathen celebration.” It was illegal to celebrate the holiday until the British monarchy was restored in 1660.

- The Puritans of New England also outlawed Christmas. The following law was passed in Massachusetts in 1659: “Whoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas and the like, either by forbearing labor, feasting or any other way, shall pay for any such offense five shillings as a fine to the country.” The law remained on the books for 22 years, and Christmas was not a legal holiday in Massachusetts until just before the Civil War.

- In Spain, Christmas gifts are not exchanged until January 6—for a very good reason. That is the date commemorating the visit of the Magi, who were the first to offer Christmas gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. On that night, children set their shoes outside on the doorstep, filling them with straw for the camels. They believe the wise men will use the straw to feed their camels and, in return, fill the shoes with gifts and candy.

- The custom of sending Christmas cards began in 1843 when a wealthy Englishman, Sir Henry Cole, ran out of time to write personal letters to his friends at Christmas. He commissioned an artist, John Calcott Horsley, to design a card instead. Horsley drew a picture of a group of merry-wishers raising their glasses in a toast. Underneath were the words, “A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You.” The card created much controversy, as critics complained it encouraged holiday drinking. But the custom of sending cards at Christmas caught on, nonetheless.

- The Poinsettia is a Christmas tradition harkening from Mexico. According to legend, a boy named Pablo was headed to his village church to see its nativity scene. Realizing he had no gift for the Christ child, he hurriedly gathered some branches and weeds from the roadside. When he laid them before the manger, the other children laughed at him. But suddenly, on each branch appeared the brilliant, star-shaped flower of the Poinsettia.

- Candy canes were reportedly developed by a Christian candy maker in Indiana who built the story of Christmas into each piece. The hardness of the candy represents the solid rock of the Christian faith. The white represents the sinlessness of Christ, and the red stripes symbolize the bloody wounds caused by his flogging. The shape of the candy is that of a shepherd’s staff, representing Christ as our Good Shepherd. Turned upside down, it forms the letter “J”—for Jesus.

- Our word Christmas comes from the English observance of the birth of Christ called Christes masse (Christ’s mass) because a special mass was celebrated on that day. In France, it’s known as Noel; in Spain, Navidad; and in Italy, Natale—all those words meaning simply birthday. The Germans use the word Weihnachten, meaning holy nights.

- The word Yule comes from the Teutonic tribes of northern Europe. Because their winters were so long and harsh and their days so short, they always celebrated the winter solstice on December 22, the shortest day of the year. It was a time of great joy for them. From that point, each year, the days began to lengthen. They called the month Yule, or Jol, from which we get our English word jolly.

- The day after Christmas is commonly called “Boxing Day” in England because of the custom of giving Christmas boxes containing gifts and money to the servants. (Morgan, Robert J.: Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, S. 110)



UPCOMING Events



ANGEL TREE 2023

Please sign up for Angel Tree in the foyer. Each year Living Word serves over 80 Angel Tree children and teens with a gift for the holidays. We appreciate your support and for more information contact **Janice Brown** at jrbrown-10@att.net or **Linda Harrison** at harrison2383@sbcglobal.net



SILVER STARS CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Join the Silver Stars for their annual Christmas Luncheon on December 8th from 11am-2pm at Fratelli’s Ristorante. The cost is \$25 per Living Word Silver Star member and \$40 per person for all guests. For more information contact **Ms. Jacquelyn Jordan** or **Ms. Birdie Williams** at jacqjordan@att.net



TOY DRIVE FOR LWFC KIDZ

Living Word Family, we need you! LWFC Kidz is accepting unwrapped toy donations for the Annual Kids Community Christmas Party on Saturday, December 16, 2023 from 10 am - 12 pm. Bins will be placed in the foyer and the Children’s Wing so please donate toys for the kids in the community and join us on December 16th! For more information contact **Mrs. Sylvia Edwards** at sedwards@lwfellowshipchurch.org



URBAN MISSIONS TEAM PACKS OF LOVE

The Urban Missions Team Is now accepting Packs Of Love donations to serve and be distributed to the unhoused population in downtown Houston on Christmas Day. Donations will be collected at the end of Life Application on Sundays and Tuesday Nights. Donation bins will be available for collections. For more information contact **Natividad Smith** at nds_smith@yahoo.com



WOMEN OF GRACE BRIDGING THE GAP EVENT ON SUN. DEC. 10TH AT 1 PM

Ladies and Teen Girls, please join us for a special event to Bridge the Gap on Sunday, December 10, 2023 from 1:00-2:30 p.m. in Legacy Sanctuary, after Contemporary Service. Refreshments & Childcare will be provided. Register below and submit your questions for a panel discussion. Register here at <https://bit.ly/LWFCBridgingGap>



ORDER OF WORSHIP

Announcements

Communion

Visitor’s Welcome

Worship In Giving

Offering boxes are located at all perimeters under crosses

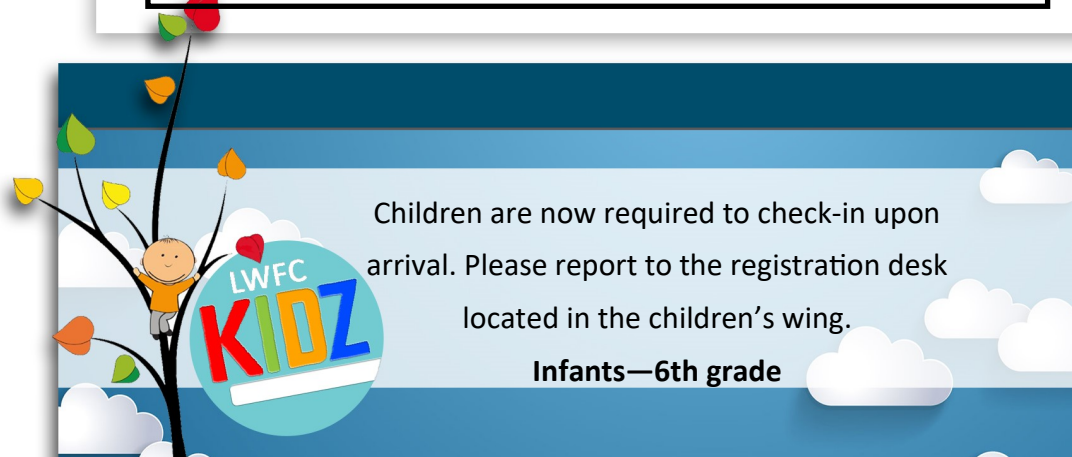
Special Music

“Family Tree”
Isaiah 11:1

Click “Sermon Notes” on the Website

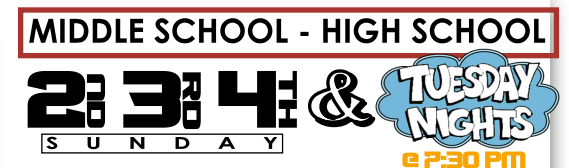
Call to Discipleship
Please remain seated at this time

Benediction



Children are now required to check-in upon arrival. Please report to the registration desk located in the children’s wing.

Infants—6th grade



Family Tree
Isaiah 11:1

- I. Pruning v.1**
- a. The Cut
- i. The prophecy reaches behind David to Jesse (just as Mic 5:1 [2] reaches behind Jerusalem to Bethlehem). „גִּזְעַ” “stump,” is descriptive of a broken, cut-off dynasty. It takes up the figure of the Master Forester from 10:33–34 with the trimming and thinning of the forest describing the troubled times of Ahaz’s reign. It realistically recognizes the severely reduced status of the throne, a reduction by the division of the kingdom (cf. 7:17) and more recently by the vassal status of Ahaz and the reduced area controlled by Judah. A “stump” indeed!
 - ii. Although the audience may presently suffer under adverse conditions as a consequence of Ahaz’s sins and Assyria’s oppression (11:16), they should trust God because of what he will do in the future. He will not abandon his people, but will cause the remnant to return (10:20–27; 11:10–12), deliver them from oppression, re-establish them as his holy people in Zion (cf. 4:2–6), and inaugurate an era of peace between the nations (2:1–5). This future glorious kingdom and its just ruler (9:1–7; 11:1–9) are set in contrast to the Assyrian kingdom and its arrogant ruler in 10:5–14.
- b. Shoot
- i. Timing
- 1. and the great mosaic of pictures that follows. „הִנֵּה” “behold,” and the participle in 10:33 portray an act of God that is already apparent. Thus this passage begins to picture the possibilities that derive from that act. „צֵא” “come out,”
- ii. Genealogy
- 1. can refer to being born (Gen 35:11) or to his appearance as king (Zech 5:5). Gen 17:6 uses it for his genealogy (cf. Mic 5:1 [2]).
 - 2. The shoot (חֹטֵר) or the branch (נֶצֶר) springs not from fresh new ground (a new dynasty) but from the old stump or roots. Jesse’s descendants will take on new life. Job 14:7 The term „חֹטֵר” “shoot,” is used only here in this meaning, while „נֶצֶר” “branch,” appears only here in royal Davidic literature.
- iii. Promise to Grow (Davidic Covenant)
- 1. He knew that the monarchy could not survive the unbelief of Ahaz (7:9); he foresaw too the ensuing calamity (6:9–12). It would have been odd indeed if he had not felt the tension between this vision of termination and his other predictions of future Davidic glory (1:25–27). Will the Lord then revoke his promises or will he keep them? Passages like 9:1–7 and 11:1–16 arise out of this tension in Isaiah’s message and affirm the faithfulness of God to his purposes and promises
 - 2. Ps 2, the one in the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7:11–16, and the one ruling justly on the throne of David in Isa 9:1–7.
- II. Roots Isaiah 11:1 Matthew 1:6 Romans 15:12**
- a. Roots
- 1. Jesse, the father of David, is compared to a root from which there had grown a tree—the line of Jewish monarchs descended from David; this tree has been cut down; but the roots remain in the earth and a mere stump above ground, i.e. the throne of David has fallen, but the family of David survives; as from the stump of a tree that has been felled there may shoot forth new growth (Job 14:7–9, cp Is 6:13),
 - 2. The Lord would cut down the forests and the mighty trees (10:33–34), that is, foreign soldiers and leaders, but God’s kingdom will arise by a Shoot coming up from the stump of Jesse, David’s father (cf. Rev. 22:16).
- III. Bear Fruit v.1**
- a. New Growth
- i. While the family of David survives, hope remains that some member of it may re-establish the monarchy, and thus, in the terms of the figure, become the new shoot and green growth from the old roots.
 - ii. Isaiah undoubtedly was thinking of God’s promise to David (2 Sam. 7:16) that a Descendant of David will rule over his kingdom (cf. Isa. 9:7) forever. This Branch, the Messiah (cf. Jer. 23:5), will bear fruit, that is, prosper and benefit others. (He is the Root; cf. Isa. 11:10.) This Hebrew word for branch (nēšer) differs from the word used for branch in 4:2 (šemaḥ). However, the concept is the same. (Yônēq in 53:2 for “tender shoot” is still another word.) He will come directly from the line of David (cf. Matt. 1:1) and will fulfill God’s promises in the Davidic Covenant.
 - iii. The text describes a new ruler from Jesse’s Davidic line (11:1) who fears the Lord (11:2–3), practices justice (11:4–5), establishes peace (11:6–9), slays the wicked (11:4), restores the oppressed people of Judah and Israel (11:10–16), and causes the earth to be full of the knowledge of the Lord (11:9). This figure calls to mind another kingly figure who will rule justly (Ps 72:1–2, 7), establish a time of peace and prosperity (72:3, 7, 16), deliver the oppressed (72:2, 4, 12–14), and cause the earth to be full of the glory of the Lord (72:19)

The Singles Ministry
Presents

CUFFING

Season

SATURDAY DECEMBER 9, 2023 6 P.M.

Take Our Anonymous Survey
<https://bit.ly/CuffingSeasonSurvey>



Bridging the Gap

Join Us For a Diverse Panel Discussion About Life!

L.E.G.I.T Women of Grace LEGACY

TITUS 2:3-5

Sunday, December 10, 2023
1:00-2:30p.m. in Legacy Sanctuary
Refreshments & Childcare will be provided

Register at <https://bit.ly/LWFCBridgingGap>



PRAYER REQUESTS

Grieving: Pamela Farris & family, Terri Kuvach & family, Donnie Emerson & family, Deidra McKoy & family, Rudy Mazin & family, Ruth Cranford & family, Michelle Lee & family, the family of Joseph Guillory, and the family of Wanda Turk.

Health and Healing: Lurlean Lane, Florence Wiggins, Retha Amos, Cici Sharpe, Margaret Baptiste, Eunice Johnson, Jeffrey McQueen, Eric White, Pat Crawford, Lisa Roberts, Birdie Williams, Jon Heard, Rutha Patrick, Betty Goode, Latifah Brown, Tanisha Collins, Eric Prichett, Rufus Hadnot, Pat James, Kevin Carey, Lori Lee, Aray Williams, Sherri Love, Elizabeth Clark, Clara Williams, Betty Cunningham, Dorothy Price, Kathryn Ford-Cheatham, Anthony Thomas, Beverly Austin, Joshua Williams, Ruby Hunter, Elizabeth Bean, Patsy Gatterson, Joyce Newsome, Arleatha Housley, and Patrina Johnson.

FAMILY TREE



ISAIAH 11:1

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