



DAY 8

Sunday, December 9

(Candle of Love)

ISAIAH 11:1–10 &  
MATTHEW 3:1–12

*“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.”*

—Isaiah 11:6

## The Reign of God

by Kristen Filipic

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The glory of Israel is dead and gone. Only a stump remains—a reminder of the tree that once seemed so strong. And yet, when life and strength seem a distant memory, a sprout appears. It is small and fragile, but this sprout is alive and growing, and that life changes everything.

Isaiah tells us that this small sign of hope will grow into the awaited Messiah who inaugurates an age of justice and peace. This Messiah will be so steeped in God’s ways and in such communion with the Holy Spirit that he sees with God’s eyes and judges justly. The world may see the poor as objects of pity. We may judge with what we see with our eyes and blame the poor for their own situation. If we do not condemn the poor, too often we see ourselves as having mercy on the less fortunate and congratulate ourselves on our generosity. The Messiah will see differently. He will not act with pity but with righteousness, giving decisions for the poor of the earth with justice.

When the Messiah rules with justice, all of creation lives together in peace and safety. As we look at the world, we see some conflicts as so deeply entrenched that they seem part of the natural order. We see these tensions as situations to be managed and endured rather than healed. Isaiah tells us to dream bigger. In the reign of the Christ, lambs can play among wolves without fear. However long-lasting human enmities are, they are less deeply rooted than the distrust sheep have for wolves. Under the Messiah’s reign, that distrust melts away and all creatures are reconciled. If God can build trust between wolves and sheep, what human conflicts can he not heal?

Isaiah paints a beautiful, much beloved picture. But while Isaiah was describing the distant future, we live after the Messiah has come. Jesus constantly proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is now at hand. For Christians, the reign of God is not some distant vision but our present reality. The Christ has come, and that changed everything.

This is the truth we proclaim—but do we live it? John the Baptist insists that saying the right words means nothing if our lives tell a different story. We may say that the Kingdom of the Christ has come, but when we live firmly entrenched in the kingdom of this world, then John’s attacks aim straight for us. We are no better than a brood of vipers.

Once again Isaiah brings hope. In the reign of the Christ, we vipers can be healed as well. “The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand in the viper’s nest.” We may be vipers, but God can draw out our venom and teach us to live in harmony. Let it be so.

### RESPOND:

**DO:** Consider what relationships in your life you think of as beyond healing. How can you seek reconciliation?

**PRAY:** Lord Jesus, we proclaim that your kingdom has come. Help us to live that proclamation. Teach us to see with righteousness and act with justice so that all may live in peace.