

ISA 11:1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. [2] And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. [3] And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; [4] But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. [5] Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

Jesse's Fruit Bearing Branch

Isaiah 11:1-5

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2). Do you understand what this means? When your mind is renewed, you are transformed. Transformed in what way? In your thinking – your reason, in your feeling – your emotions, in your doing – your actions. Let me say this again. "Be TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your MIND." Do you understand what this means? When your mind IS renewed you ARE transformed in all of these ways. Have you ever experienced this truth for yourself? Maybe you haven't. Let me say it yet again. "BE transformed by the renewing of your mind." If your mind is renewed does it sound like it is optional that you may or may not be transformed? Do you believe this to be the truth or do you think that really, in the final analysis, this is just a bunch of hogwash?

How you answer this question, of course, has everything to do with what you think it is that in fact *renews* the mind. There are four basic options for what you might use to renew your mind. Of these four options, only one may come first in your thinking. The others, as important as they all are, are incapable of doing anything *by themselves*.

Do the Affections Renew the mind?

Two of these options are more popular in our day than the other two. The first option that many people try in order to renew their mind is to use their emotions. The idea is if you prime the emotional pump in this model, then you will be transformed. If we can get people energized enough, riled up enough, angry enough, hyped enough, happy enough, or stoked enough, then we will be changed people. Our minds will follow in line. Is this not the way of much modern contemporary church? You have 3 hours of worship (which means emotionally gratifying "praise music") which "prepares you" to "hear" the (5 minute) message. **What is the obvious problem with this?** The emotional are **always fluctuating**. Though you may be hyped for one hour, the next hour - because of the way God has wired our emotions - we have to come down from the mountain top to live in the real world. If the emotions transform us, and we live most of our lives down in the valley, then it should be pretty obvious to any thinking person that you simply are not going to be transformed for very long.

Do Our Actions Renew the Mind?

Another option, perhaps even more popular than the first is to believe that the *actions* renew the mind and transform our lives. What transforms actions? Commands and laws, of course (along with the threat of punishment or the blessing of reward). It is true that commands and laws transform our actions isn't it? That's why the Scripture is chocked full in both Testaments with commands. So the idea is that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds by giving people a whole bunch of commands and demands upon their lives.

What is the basic problem with this way of thinking? First, you have to understand that this was in fact the initial way that God actually set things up. The promise was, quite literally, that Adam would be *transformed* into an eschatological eternal state if he had obeyed the command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But even in his pre-fallen state he could not obey the command. How much worse then is it for us? The main problem we now face is that it is our actions which themselves need transformation. How do you transform that which is first in need of transformation? You can't fix spark plug with a broken spark plug! If you refuse to listen to what the Bible says that laws do us, then you will never understand Romans 12:2. What does the law do (or rather what does it not do?) The law does not give us the power to obey it. It is a burden and a yoke and no one is able to bear. Laws by themselves do not because they cannot transform us or renew our minds. All they can do is place us in greater debt and make our bondage to sin that much worse.

Does the Mind renew the mind?

There is yet another option that some people try. This is the way of the philosopher. When this person hears that we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, they understand it to mean that the mind is renewed by... the mind. This view places the same burden upon books and the brain that the former person places upon the law and the body. That is, if you give the mind enough things to think about, enough reasons to believe, enough logical problems to solve that the mind will in turn be renewed and you will be transformed. But the problem with this view is the same as the former. The mind is in every way as much in need of transformation as the body ever could be. In fact, we only do things because of the mind. If we do evil, it is because the mind is evil. So the mind cannot be the way to be renewed.

Paul is saying that transformation starts with the mind, not that the mind itself does the transforming. The mind is the door to the soul. Paul is saying that transformation of the mind works its way necessarily to the way we think, feel, and act. But he is not saying that any of these things by themselves transform us. Thus, we are in need of something completely different, something totally outside of ourselves to renew us and transform us. We need something to transform us that is not in a state of flux, something that does not change. That "something" is actually a "Someone." If you are in need of transformation, then you have to have someone doing the transforming. But it can't be you, it must be someone completely perfect and powerful and wise who is himself in need of no transformation and who is powerful enough to transform you.

Christ Alone Renews the Mind Through the Means of Grace

Now, I have said many times from this pulpit that Jesus Christ is our application. But this is esoteric and strange sounding to some of you. It is time to alleviate some of your misunderstanding. I don't mean that *thinking* about Christ is your application. I don't mean *living* like Christ is your application. I don't mean *feeling* good about what Christ has done for you is your application – though all of these things are good and necessary. What I mean is that Christ *himself* is your application. He applies the changes to your mind that are necessary through the means of grace: Proper preaching, Sacraments, Scripture reading and singing. You see, it is not by doing anything with Christ but by *receiving* Christ that you are renewed and transformed. He is the one who renews your mind (first) as you hear proper teaching and theology, and then your heart, and your body follow in line like soldiers in a unit.

We have examples of this in every day life. It is not by thinking about food or feeling about food or working at preparing food that your body is nourished. It is by the *receiving* of food

by eating and digesting it that you are nourished and transformed. So it is also with Jesus, which is the principle reason why He so often identifies himself to us as our Bread and our Water. We must eat him and drink from his living well if we have any hope of being renewed in our minds.

This is all particularly timely for some of you as it is for the text that we are studying this morning. Before us in chapter 11 of Isaiah is Messiah full grown and beautiful like an oak tree in full bloom. This morning, I wish to feed you with Christ himself. Look upon him today, taste him anew, chew upon him, swallow his spiritual life and digest his being into the depths of your soul until you are fully satisfied.

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. [54] Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. [55] For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. [56] Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. [57] Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. [58] This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:53-58).

This is as mystical of a thing as is the process of growing by food, but I assure you it is just as real as the physical counterpart. It troubles me to no end to think that some of you still do not understand this. So I want to challenge you this morning. Are you satisfied in Jesus Christ today? Do you trust that as your application, Jesus Christ WILL and DOES renew your mind and transform your actions and emotions? Have you received him or are you trusting still in yourself with him only as your coach or your cheerleader to encourage you to do the things that he commands? When you hear me talk just now, do you feel I am giving you an excuse to sin or do you understand that it is only in light of this truth that the law makes any sense? Do you hear me saying that the mind is of no value, that God does not work through the mind, or do you understand that when you receive Christ that HE renews your mind because he loves it and created it? Do you hear me saying that we are to be devoid of emotion, that emotions don't matter? Or do you understand that it is only with Christ that the emotions make any sense that that as you are united to Christ that your emotions can be more stable and rich and meaningful than you have ever thought possible?

Isaiah picks up a theme that he began way back in [chapter 4:2](#). "In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride of the adornment of the remnant of Israel." Back in [chapter 4](#), all we knew was that there would be in latter days a glorious and beautiful branch that would be for the remnant a fruit bearing tree. But now we begin to see this in much more detail. Gaze now upon your Messiah as God presents him to you here, and view him for who he really is. Then, trust that as you do this that he will make himself known to you in wonderful ways.

Where does this whole idea of a branch of Jesse come from? It's a question worth pursuing. Something was foretold long ago, at the exact time when all seemed lost. There was a promise given to mankind. God himself gave this promise. When God promises something, he makes sure that it comes to pass, for it is his own Name and Reputation that are on the line. The promise revolved around the lineage of a woman, that there would come a king to crush all the hopes and aspirations of the people of Satan with the finality that comes to a man who gets his head chopped off.

All of history is about the continual working out of this promise, first through a very small group of people, then through a nation, then back down through only one certain tribe from

that nation, and finally through the line of one man – David, the King of Israel. To David a covenant of grace was renewed and an old promise was narrowed to his specific line.

"Now therefore, [Nathan] you shall say to My servant David, ` Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be ruler over My people Israel... I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth... The LORD... declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. [12] "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. [14] "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, [15] but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. [16] "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."" [17] In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David (2 Sam 7:8-17.)

God promised David that from him would come a royal king whose kingdom would endure and whose throne would be established forever. This would not be some temporary kingdom, like those of all other nations. This would be an everlasting kingdom and this king would never cease to rule once his reign begins.

Now, David's father was Jesse and Jesse was from the line of Judah. Judah was the great grandson of Abraham. Abraham was descended from Shem who was the son of Noah. What difference does any of this make to understanding Isaiah? I don't want to go back farther than Noah, but I hope you understand that Noah was saved because he was a righteous man from the righteous line. Noah came through the line of Seth who was the promised line – the line of "the woman."

After the earth was destroyed, God renews his covenant. Specifically, God renews his covenant with Shem. To Shem the son of Noah it was said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. "May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant" (Gen 9:26-27). The significance of Japheth (the brother of Shem) dwelling in the tent of Shem is that God is here promising to Shem that he would be a ruler. Shem would be a King. Shem would be God's king and God would make a name for himself through one whose name means "name." If that were all we knew, it would be pretty insignificant.

Much time passes before we learn something new. God will bless Shem in a very specific way. God comes to one of his descendants, a man named Abram and gives Abram this promise: "My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations and kings shall come forth from you." (Gen 17:4, 6). This is to be an "everlasting covenant to you and your descendants after you." How long does an everlasting covenant last? Forever! Thus, we see hints here that something much more than a mere man must fulfill this promise.

God again narrows down the covenant through Abraham's great grandson Judah. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Gen 49:10). You see, God will fulfill the promise he made to Eve, to Seth, to Shem and to Abraham. The promise of a ruler and a king would come through Judah. Now, Jesse is a distant descendant of Judah (Mt 1:2, 5).

If you had been around in Jesse's day and seen what God did in making Saul to be king, you had reason to question what was going on with this appointment. Something strange

had happened. God had given a king to the rebellious children of Israel, but this king had been a Benjamite. It is interesting that God picked the first king of Israel to be one of whom it was prophesied, "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he devours the prey, And in the evening he divides the spoil." What could describe King Saul better than this? Yet, what is more significant is what was not promised to Benjamin. For to Benjamin it was never promised that a king would come from him. This is why you would have been correct to question what God was doing.

And this is what makes the identification of Jesse's stump so important. Rather than a false king like Saul, God will establish a faithful king from the correct line – because God's reputation is at stake. In selecting David and promising David a house of kings, God is renewing with David Judah's covenant! So now we see the significance of Jesse. "A shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit." God promised already that there would come a branch who would be beautiful and glorious. Now we know that this branch is to be a mighty king. This is to be a very royal family tree! It is to be an everlasting king! Do you wonder at how it is that Christ can be your application? Wonder no more. It is because Jesus Christ is the High King of Heaven. He is powerful enough and has the authority to do anything he wishes. Do you really want to question whether or not he can make himself known to you through as you receive him through his word?

It is said that from the roots of Jesse's stump that a branch will *bear fruit*. Recall the meaning of a stump. Jesse has a stump because the temporal line of David will come to an end. The tree will fall to the ground, all but a stump even as Israel will cease to be a nation and she will cease to have a king sit on the throne for a time. The Mighty Oak of the kings will be cut down to a little stump in the exile of Judah to Babylon. But out of this stump, out of what many would think to be a lifeless dead lump, God will make a branch to rise forth and bear fruit.

Do you wonder how it is that Christ is your application, how any of this makes sense? You cannot be your own application and you cannot apply anything to yourself which itself does not have life. Dead things need life, not exhortations and emotional experiences and books to read. Bones need heart pumping blood. Fruit needs a living vine. Do you see that this Great Promised King from Jesse's own body is a living, fruit bearing branch? And that he comes out of nothing but a chopped down stump of wood?

How is life created? The most obvious answer is that life begets life. God is a living being. When God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, what else are we to understand than that God is himself "alive?" Of the father it is said, "the Father has life in Himself" (John 5:26). The Holy Spirit of God is himself called the *ruach*, that is the wind or breath, the same breath that gave life to Adam. And of the Son it is said that he is "the way the truth and the LIFE." Do you need anymore of an explanation for how Christ himself renews your mind and transforms your actions (through commands) than to understand that this is the very process life being brought out of non-life? When you receive Christ you are receiving, not tips for better living, but life itself – the life you need to very desperately. Can you see that the word of God which is Christ is the living breath of God and that he uses this to breath life into your lifeless heart of stone?

This is what it means, then, for the branch to bear fruit. All who trust in Christ are united with him so that his life becomes their life. This is why Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

You may wonder why the Spirit is brought up here in Isaiah's passage? It is because [the life that is necessary to make fruit come forth is found in the Spirit](#). Jesus our High King has life in himself in as much as he is God. Yet there is an order in the Trinity that is a deep mystery. Listen to the mysterious words of Christ on this matter. ["For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself."](#) Strange, isn't it? That the Father gives life to the Son so that he might have life "in Himself." Here we have at the same time life being completely dependent upon the Father and yet completely self-sustaining and existing, for it is "in himself." Well, do you think that the Spirit is not also involved in this mystery? Certainly He is.

As a man, Christ was given the very breath of life. He was born of a virgin and of the Spirit! Christ was the only man ever born ALIVE! Do you know what happened at Christ's baptism? The Spirit of God descended upon Christ like a dove, in the same manner that he presided over the flood in Noah's day or over creation prior to Adam. The Spirit of God is intimately connected to Christ's life. The Spirit is the one who anoints Christ for his priestly ministry ([Isaiah 61:1](#) ["The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me."](#)). Jesus reads from Isaiah's text at the beginning of his ministry to show the people that in his coming, the prophesy is fulfilled. But at this time in Isaiah 11 we learn about the Spirit's work in many other ways.

It is significant to see that the Spirit "rests" upon the righteous branch. The Spirit is likened to a bird in many places in Scripture as we have seen. When he hovers, he is presiding as a ruler over his realm. When he comes to rest upon someone, it is a sign of a great outpouring of supernatural power through anointing. The truly amazing thing of it all is that the church age sees this same transforming Spirit power in the life of every single believer. We have it because we are united to Christ and he had it. This is the meaning of Pentacost.

The meaning of the anointing of the Spirit is not some goofy TV Pentecostal ability to remove all your debts and all your sickness. Rather, it is an anointing of kingship. It is like when the diadem is laid over the prince's shoulder or when the oil is poured over the head. This is a mark of becoming a king. But it is a deeply spiritual mark and thus it is accompanied with great signs.

In the case of this branch, we see that what rests upon him is a spirit of [wisdom](#), of [understanding](#), of [counsel](#), of [strength](#), of [knowledge](#), and of the [fear of the LORD](#). This Branch is not just some king. And what is pictured for you here will not allow you to conclude that he is merely a great man, a good moral teacher, an enlightened Buddha or some other such nonsense. Rather, what is pictured for you here is that this Branch, because he has the Spirit of God himself upon him, rules as king in every possible way that God himself rules the universe.

It is never said of anyone prior to this that he rules in such a perfect way. This is not just wisdom but the Spirit of God himself's wisdom that rests upon this man. It is not just some understanding, but God's understanding. It is not just some ability to counsel, but God's ability. Not just some strength, but all of the strength and might that created the universe itself. It is not just some knowledge, but all knowledge for this is God's Spirit we are talking about.

Now rather than do a word study on what each of these things mean, let's continue with the context that these things are found in. For you see, all of these things are applied to this Righteous and Royal Branch as he is a king over the whole earth. The context here (in other places it is his priestly or prophetic capacity) is how the Spirit applies these things to the branch so that he might rule perfectly.

Do you wonder how it is that Christ is your application? Well, it is because he is the king and he rules his universe with perfect oversight, doing exactly what he sees fit. Don't you think that includes changing your life as well so that it conforms to the very person whom you are now spiritually united to by faith? As a king ruling a kingdom has laws to keep the kingdom safe and secure, do you think that this King isn't going to give you the desire to obey his laws out of gratitude to him?

These words of [Isaiah 11:3-5](#) are a valuable pearl to those who are oppressed and downtrodden. But to those who are prideful and wicked, they are a deadly sword. Which person are you? How does this king rule his subjects? He is not like human judges who can only decide a case by what they see or by what facts are presented to them by others.

This king, you see, has all wisdom and understanding. He knows exactly what every person is doing in secret or in the open. He knows all the facts. He is not therefore guided by his eyes and he does not make decisions by what his ears hear ([vs. 3](#)). Instead, he judges with righteousness. This has a specific audience. It is the poor who are judged with righteousness. Matthew and Luke make it clear that the poor are both [physical poor](#) ([Lk 6:20](#) - those who have been treated with great injustice on this earth) and the [spiritually poor](#) ([Mt 5:3](#) - those who are humble in heart and know their great need for a deliverer from their bondage to sin).

The idea is parallel in the next phrase: [he decides with fairness for the afflicted of the earth](#). How is Christ your application? What good does it do for your life to hear about Christ himself? Well, Christ is the judge. He makes decisions. He acts. He judges. Where are you in all of this? Why, you are on the defense stand, doing nothing more than waiting for the judgment of the court. For Christ comes to judge not just the poor in the nation of Israel with fairness, but all those like this among the whole earth! Do you think this might include you too?

It is possible, however, that it does not include you because you have not trusted in Jesse's Branch for your salvation. If Christ is not your defense attorney, then he will be your prosecuting attorney and his judgment will fall swiftly upon you. If you are not yet able to see how Christ is your application, perhaps it is because you are still trusting in yourself be it your intellect, your muscle, or your spiritual "highs." See now what this will mean for you.

["He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked."](#) I know that many of you have heard this message time and time again. Perhaps some of you though have never actually listened to what it means. Friends, do not be fooled. Messiah that was here prophesized as Jesse's Branch *has come* in the flesh.

The world has gotten it all wrong, because they refuse to face the truth of what the Scripture says of him. He simply is not our coach or our personal guru or our cheerleader or our Aesop. He is now the King of Kings and he rules with a rod of iron. His inauguration took place the day he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He will consummate his kingship the day he returns to earth on a glimmering white stallion. But he is king now nevertheless. Just because he presently resides in heavenly places, it does not mean he has left his physical body or forsaken his plan to return. Even now he is ushering his kingdom into this world through his own people who are his body while he is away.

When he returns, it will be with speed and finality. Even as he judges the poor and afflicted with righteousness and fairness, so he will likewise judge the wicked bringing to

condemning and then putting them to death with nothing more than the breath of his lips. As life comes from the Breath of God, so too does death. You wonder how Christ is your application? All he has to do is breath and the result is more action than you and I could have in a lifetimes of actions. With one little word, God fells all the wicked. His mouth is a rod that he uses to strike with. You think this is incapable of transforming your life and your mind? Do you still think you need Christ plus something else? Do you still think that he is not enough for you? Do not be a fool.

The righteousness of The Branch is a double-edged sword. He girds his whole being with it. It is like a belt about his loins and as faithfulness is a belt about his waist. Because he does not change, you may be certain of both judgments here. If you remain wicked, you will be destroyed. He will slay you without only the smallest effort, a mere breath from his lips.

How do you become righteous? To recall the theme of this sermon, it is by understanding again and again that Christ is your application because Christ is your life. It is not Christ alone and then after you are saved Christ plus something else. "Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Gal 3:3). When you trust Jesus Christ by faith alone, do you know that you become united to him? Did you know that on the cross he took the penalty for your sin by dying a death he did not deserve in your place? Did you know that in his resurrection, even as he takes your sin at his death, you receive his life? Do you understand that this means that all that is Christ's from his perfect status before the Father to his righteousness and faithfulness and perfect delight in fearing God becomes yours? And you still wonder how it is that Christ is your application and what this means?

Do you recall the armor of God in [Ephesians 6](#)? You learn here about belt of truth and a breastplate of righteousness and the shield of faith(fullness). That imagery sounds very similar to this here. Do you know that these things are not something that you put on by yourself (thinking of what we began this sermon with). Rather, they are the very clothing of Christ. "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal 3:27). The armor of God is to put on Christ, to renew your mind upon him. What's his is yours because he is yours, because you are united to him by faith through his grace alone.

This is what it means, then to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. It means that you continually and repeatedly come to the living water for your nourishment. You drink deeply from the well of the Son of God. When you do, you are never thirsty again. Do not despair anymore of your continual failures at keeping the law. Place your eyes upon the Son of God. Behold that a light is shining in the darkness. In this new light, see how Shem and Judah and Jesse's prophecy is fulfilled in a King who now reigns over this world. And know that the King of kings is your application for living the Christian life, because only he has lived the Christian life and you are united to him even now. And remember that God gives you the very ability to keep his laws whatever they may be because you have been judged already with fairness and with righteousness and God has pronounced your "not guilty" though you are guilty because you trust that Jesus was pronounced guilty though he was not guilty. The other alternative is, hopefully, something you will not desire to see in your own future life.