

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Isaiah 11:1–10 • A Branch from Jesse

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Isaiah 11:1–10 A Branch from Jesse
Matthew 3:1–12 . . . Prepare the way for the Lord

Overview

Today we continue to look at the prophecies of the Lord's advent found in Isaiah. Our reading contains the famous vision of the peaceable kingdom—an idyllic world in which predators and prey live side by side, in safety and contentment. Such dreams may seem far off; but we can encourage the children to have them, because it gives them hopes and ideals for the future. Our focus today is to show how these hopes can gradually become reality as each of us accepts and lives by the message of active love represented by the Lord's advent into our world.

Key Points

- It is good to hope and dream for things in our world to be better than they are now.
- Things do become better as we accept the Lord more and more into our lives—which is what Christmas is all about.
- Accepting the Lord into our lives means loving each other and being kind to each other.

Example for Teaching Children

A couple of months ago (October 11) we talked about what a perfect world would be like. Do any of you remember how you described your perfect world? Or would you like to describe it now? (*Let them describe their perfect world again.*)

Today, our reading from Isaiah has a vision of a beautiful, peaceful world. But before we look at Isaiah's vision, tell me what you think: If someone put a wolf and a little lamb together in a field, what do you think would happen? (*Pause for responses.*) How about a leopard and a little goat kid? (*Pause*) Or lion and a cow's calf? (*Pause*)

Wolves, leopards, and lions are all predators. Unless they've already had enough to eat, if you were to put them with those little, helpless animals, they would eat them right up.

But in our story today, the prophet Isaiah says that when the Lord comes, it will be different! Isaiah gives a dream, or vision, of a world in which no person or no animal would ever hurt anyone or anything else—and everyone lives peacefully together.

Do you think there will ever be a time when wolves won't eat lambs, and leopards won't eat goat kids, and lions won't eat calves? (*Pause*) It seems hard to imagine that predators wouldn't be predators anymore. How would nature work?

We don't know whether the Lord will ever change the way nature works. But there is one thing the Lord *will* help us to change: the way we treat each other. Do you ever act like wolves or leopards or lions toward each other? (*Pause*) How? (*Pause*)

Sometimes we act like predators. We use mean words like a lion's teeth to rip into someone else's feelings; or we use our hands to hit people instead of using them to do kind things for people.

Now that we are getting ready for Christmas, we can imagine the Lord coming into our lives and helping us not to be mean to each other anymore. We can imagine the Lord helping us to be truthful and kind and thoughtful of others every day. And *that* is a very good dream to have!

Basic Correspondences

lamb, kid, calf = three levels of innocence
wolf, leopard, lion = evil things we need not fear
root of Jesse = the Lord

a banner = truth gathering people together
nations = all people who live from love

Thoughts from Swedenborg

In the Bible, a "little child" means innocence, and also kindness, since there can be no real innocence without kindness. . . . In Isaiah 11:6, the lamb, kid, and calf stand for three levels of innocence and love; the wolf, leopard, and young lion stand for their opposites; and the little child stands for kindness.

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In Isaiah 11:10, "the root of Jesse" is the Lord. To "stand as a banner for the people" means that he will be seen by people who have true ideas. "The nations that will inquire" means people who are involved in the goodness of love. One belief is that "nations" here means the nations that will come and accept the Lord, so that the Christian Church will be the church of the non-Christian nations also. But this is not what "nations" means. Rather, it means all people who love the Lord and have faith in him—whether they are Christians or not. *Apocalypse Explained #175a.6*