*Read also Isaiah 11:1-10. Check out the service at* [*www.fpcd.org*](http://www.fpcd.org)*.*

One year a friend was doing some landscaping and wanted to put in some crepe myrtles. We were doing some landscaping and wanted to take out some crepe myrtles. They were just the size my friend wanted so we gave them to her.

I wanted to make sure the plants that I gave actually lived, so I dug down deep all around the roots.

At the same time, I had some overgrown Chinese fringe flower shrubs, so we decided to transplant them.

Amazingly, all these plants took hold. They became healthy thriving plants. Until, one day I noticed the old plants which we had thought we removed were coming back up. In fact, they overtook the new plants we had planted.

Isaiah said, “Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot-- yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root” (Is 11:1). We know the Scriptures—this is an image for God’s Messiah, who grew out of the old stump. But he’s not saying here that that old tree was fruitful in itself. When we lived in Red Oak, in our yard were some old Mesquite trees. Mesquite trees never die; they just spread. My husband dug them out but to no avail. They spread with no discrimination.

But the new branch from this stump grows, not because it’s like a Mesquite tree, but because God’s Spirit rests on the branch:

“And the Spirit of the LORD will 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” (v. 2).

It’s a spirit that is not common to nature or to human beings—it is wise counsel and power attributed only to God. And so this Branch is the act of God.

When Isaiah wrote those words, Israel was spiritually discouraged. The people lacked knowledge about God, though they didn’t know it. They thought they were spiritual. They also misdirected fear because they feared hard circumstances and poor economics, but they didn’t think about fearing God.[[1]](#footnote-1) So Isaiah prophesized: because of this, you are going to become like a dead stump. You are going to be conquered.

And they were. Israel was conquered and lost their nation.

But, said Isaiah, even though it seems dead, out of it will grow a new Branch. That branch, Isaiah said, will be more than what humans can produce. Out of Israel’s human line will grow Someone who is full of wisdom, counsel, knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He will have power beyond anything humanly possible.

Years passed. It seemed like Israel was lost. Then something happened. The Branch grew where death had occurred. Out of something that had been uprooted came this life. Do you ever feel like your life is dead—nothing is moving in the right direction? Hear God’s word:

Matthew 1:1-17 *This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).*

Judah wasn’t a very nice guy. He thought he hired a prostitute one day. In reality, she was his deceased grandson’s wife. According to Jewish custom he was responsible for her, but he refused to do his duty. So she tricked him, and she got what was rightfully hers in an underhanded way. Her actions might have been suspect, but this pair is in Jesus’ ancestral line. Her son,

*Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).*

Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho. But she believed in Israel’s God. Because she sought help from God, her entire family was saved when the Israelites conquered Jericho. She went on to become a Jew by faith, marry Salmon, and they had Boaz.

You know all about Boaz. He was the man who spotted Ruth the Moabite in his field when she was gleaning for her mother-in-law, Naomi. Boaz married Ruth when the man who should have married her declined because he didn’t want to expend his finances. He lost out on being in Jesus’ ancestral line. Instead, *Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).*

*Obed was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David.* Do you remember the story? Jesse was a Bethlehemite. He had eight sons. The prophet Samuel went to visit him because the Lord had selected one of his sons as king. But as the first seven came by, none of them were acceptable. “Do you have more sons?” Samuel inquired. “Yes, the youngest, but he’s not much. He’s a shepherd. Nobody likes him.” But the Lord liked him, and that was the one God chose.

*David was the father of Solomon (by the wife of Uriah).*

Bathsheba is not even mentioned by name. But she wasn’t the only one who created the problem. It takes two to tango! David hit a very low spot in life with this affair and the killing of Uriah to cover it up. That violence would play out in his family for the rest of his life.

I have a family book of genealogy. But it doesn’t have these kinds of details. There was a crazy uncle or two, and a grandfather with problems, but this is a pretty sordid group of people here!

We can all fall pretty far. But not farther than God can reach.God was angry with David but wasn’t willing to give up on him. And when God confronted him through the prophet Nathan, David confessed his sin and turned back to God.

*Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asa. Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram. Jehoram was the father of Uzziah. Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.*

Hezekiah was a man of prayer. He saved Israel because when faced with a deep military and political crisis, he went to the temple, got down on his knees and asked God for guidance. God gave him decisive victory.

How do you live your life in times of crisis? Do you take the Word of God to heart? Do you actually believe that no matter what the problem, God is willing to help? Do you notice here, people turn to God; are honest with God when they fail. Did you see the ones who lean on God in the hard times; and who get back up and have faith. Let these be your guiding principles.

Have your problems got you down? God doesn’t help those who help themselves; **God helps those who reach out for His hand, don’t give up, and who are willing to take the risk of faith.** Hezekiah did exactly that, against the odds.

*Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.*

Manasseh was one of the worst kings. He undid everything his father had done. He shed innocent blood, and even sacrificed his own son to false gods. He consulted wizards, and was into the occult. He was despicable.

*Manasseh was the father of Amon. Amon was the father of Josiah.* Two generations later, Manasseh’s grandson Josiah was a really great king. He threw out all the crap his grandfather had brought into the temple and rebuilt it. In the deteriorating building, he found the Bible, where it had lain unread for years. When it was read to Josiah, he was so moved that he read it to the entire nation so they could all return to the Lord together.

Imagine our political leaders taking up the Bible and leading us to follow its principles. Josiah established reforms according to this Book of the Law.

*Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon). After the Babylonian exile: Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud. Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob.*

*Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah. All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.*

Forty-two generations—many with a checkered past! Are these folks making you feel pretty good about your family? Yet we know we are still not all that wise, and perhaps do not fear the right things. But in this genealogy is more purpose than recording a list of names.

The kings did not set out with the intention to disregard God. They wanted to do the best for their nation. Think of your role in your family. Don’t you want to do the best? But many of them turned to their own resources rather than to God.

Most of the people, and perhaps you, too, think of whatever strength of your own you can garner to live out your life; solve your own problems. But there’s another power at work here, an overriding power—the power of God’s plan and purpose.

God’s power that can overturn and thwart anything.

That’s good news and bad news! It’s good news because God always brings hope out of bad things if you trust Him. It is bad news if you think you can outmaneuver God. Did you notice the ones who trusted Him, turned to Him in trouble, asked forgiveness, and took a risk of faith were the ones who overcame?

I assure you, only God’s action can fulfill your future because God has much greater wisdom than you.

*Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.* The Messiah—the Branch that would grow from that old, dead stump. That was because God did not give up when people failed. At no time did God walk away. God had an overriding plan and no king or earthly power could stop it.

Do you worry about the future? God sees into our lives and knows what is coming. Do you fear not knowing what you will do? Do you wonder if there is a future for you at all?

Relax. Pray. Trust. Hear Anna’s testimony, and take a close look for God in your own story. You might begin to see how God has been at work.

This Messiah whichMary bore bears the name: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He was sent for you.

Are you sticking to Him? Looking for Jesus in your life? As Carol sang:

**Of the Father’s love begotten**, Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore!

This is He Whom seers in old time chanted of with one accord;
Whom the voices of the prophets promised in their faithful word;
**Now He shines, the long expected; Let creation praise its Lord,**Evermore and evermore!

AMEN

1. John Goldingay, *New International Biblical Commentary: Isaiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 2001), 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)