

Nov 30/25 Advent 1

Leaders Guide – Isaiah 11:1–10

1. When you think about “hope,” what feelings, images, or memories come to mind for you?

Begin gently. Hope is often shaped by our recent experience—when life is going well, hope comes easily; when life is hard, hope feels distant. The sermon highlighted “recency bias”: when life is bleak, hope feels impossible. Normalize that many carry heavy loads in this season.

Read Isaiah 11:1–10

2. Isaiah describes a “shoot from the stump of Jesse.” What strikes you about this imagery? Why might God choose a stump—not a seed or fertile field—as the starting place for hope?

Use the Jasper wildfire image: total devastation, blackened forest, silence. Judah lived in similar devastation—threatened by Assyria, betrayed by their king, spiritually cut down. A stump is an image of the end of human possibility. God begins hope where we see only endings.

3. What do you notice about the qualities of the Spirit resting on the coming King?

The sevenfold Spirit signifies fullness—wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. These qualities equip the Messiah to lead with clarity, purity, and love. Unlike human leaders swayed by appearance or power, this King sees the heart truly and acts from love.

4. The sermon contrasted two sides of judgment: removing what is wrong and restoring what is right. How does that reshape your understanding of judgment?

Judgment in Scripture is restorative, not explosive. It removes what destroys and restores what gives life. Use N.T. Wright’s landlord/widow illustration: judgment is bad news for oppressors and

good news for the oppressed. God's judgment makes the world right again.

5. Isaiah describes predators and prey living in peace. What does this imagery awaken in you? How does it expand your imagination for God's future?

Encourage imagination. The sermon described how even what we call "natural" may be disordered by sin. George Herbert's line about animals knowing we have a quarrel with their Creator illustrates that creation itself groans. Under the Messiah, creation is renewed beyond our imagination.

6. Isaiah imagines a world without fear. What fears most shape or limit our world or our lives today?

Fear shapes countless decisions—fear of rejection, scarcity, being found out, loneliness, failure, death. Isaiah imagines a world without fear, where the knowledge of the Lord fills creation. Help people name fears honestly without shame.

7. Where might Jesus be inviting you to relinquish an area of your life to His healing reign?

Relinquishing means loosening our grip on areas we still try to control. The sermon urged trust: where Jesus is King, things are healed and made new. Invite people to identify one area where they're holding on tightly.

8. What fear might Jesus be calling you to release this Advent, and what truth about who he is and what he has done helps you release it?

Pair fears with truth. Jesus replaces fear of rejection with acceptance, fear of exposure with forgiveness, fear of death with resurrection life. Help participants articulate, "I fear X, but Jesus promises Y."

9. What might it look like for you, or for our church, to open more fully to the Spirit's work of new creation?

Receiving the Spirit's work means opening ourselves to transformation. The sermon emphasized becoming people who embody righteousness—right relationship with God that flows outward.

Brainstorm simple practices: silence, confession, generosity, standing with the poor etc...