

Isaiah 11:1-9

Jesus: the King you can Trust with your Life Tim Anderson 23/12/18

Friends, we have an issue with trusting leaders.

The first Prime Minister of Australia I can remember was a chap called Malcolm Fraser.

I never voted for him,

I was in grade five at school when he was voted out.

But he appears to me a leader of another era.

Someone who whether or not you voted for him you could expect to behave decently.

He seems a vivid contrast to some of the leaders of today.

OK, I'm going to pick on the most vivid of the vivid contrasts,

Donald Trump.

Now a sermon is not the place to examine the character of Donald Trump.

But suffice it to say,

even his friends don't expect him to behave decently.

How did we get to place where people are willing to elect Donald Trump?

Well it's about a crisis of confidence in leaders.

Trump was elected to 'drain the swamp'.

By that, he means getting rid of the elites

who govern the country for the benefit of them and their mates.

There was a perception out there

that the Washington insiders didn't give a fig about Joe ordinary in the street.

So the voters elected an outsider because they didn't trust the insiders.

Why did the Brits vote for Brexit?

Because there's a perception

that there's an elite

who benefit from close ties between Britain and Europe,

but the ordinary people are losing the character of the home they love.

I'm not saying that's true.
But that's the perception.
And it means people aren't trusting their leaders.

Enough politics.

What about the church?

Do we trust our leaders in the church?

Well if the recent royal commission has taught us anything,
it's that we've been too trusting of our leaders in the church.

Roy Morgan research did some polling
of the most and least trusted professions in Australia.

Ministers were between lawyers and pollsters in their results.

We were thankfully still above used car salesmen and real estate agents.

But well below Dentists and Police.

The bad news is that survey was done prior to the royal commission.

I'm guessing church leaders will have slipped further.

Can you guess which profession came out on top?

We want leaders we can trust, don't we?

There's a sense of security

in knowing that you can trust the person in charge.

The Anglican cathedral in Hobart sent out Christmas cards this year.

"Are you looking for stable leadership this Christmas?"

It's a play on the revolving door Australian Prime Ministership,

contrasted with the leader from the stable

who is stability in an unstable world.

I have some good news for you this Christmas.

God has sent us a leader who we can trust with our lives.

Jesus has many names in the Bible.

One of them is a 'shoot that comes up from the stump of Jesse'.

Now it may seem a little obscure to you,

to pick a passage written 700 years before Jesus' birth,
with an obscure name for Jesus,
and call that a Christmas passage.
Let me assure you, I didn't choose Isaiah 11 for lessons and carols.
They've been doing it
since someone invented the idea of having a lessons and carols service
150 years ago.
But this is a Christmas passage,
because it points forward to God's chosen King,
the shoot from the stump of Jesse.

Why is Jesus called a shoot from the stump of Jesse?
Well Jesse was King David's Dad.
A shoot from the stump of Jesse is another King like David.
Why is Jesse a stump?
Because Kings in his line had been cut off.
Before the coming of Jesus,
Israel went for 450 years without a king in David's line.
Jesse's tree was cut down.
It looked like the kings in David's line were finished forever.
But sometimes you see a stump,
and it looks like that stump will never grow again,
and miraculously a shoot comes up.
Jesus is that shoot.
A king in David's line
450 years after it looked like there would never be another one.

But what sort of King is Jesus?
Verse 2 tells us,
"The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him."
This is a king who God himself lives inside of.
"The Spirit of wisdom and understanding."

This is a king who doesn't make rash decisions,
doesn't fire off intemperate tweets.
He knows how the universe works and he makes it work for his people.
It says, 'he delights in the fear of the Lord'.
The fear of the Lord is not about trembling in terror.
It's about honouring the Lord as great and mighty.
And even though Jesus was in fact God the Son himself,
he did the things that a normal human who fears the Lord would do.
He took time away from the rat race to spend time in prayer.
He treated the poor and the outcast with respect.
He honoured God's word written in the Scriptures.

That kind of deep wisdom that comes from God
results in a completely different kind of leadership.
Our leaders often make superficial decisions.
What is going to give me a boost in the next opinion poll?
But Jesus doesn't give that kind of superficial leadership.
Verse 3 tells us,
"He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears."
That means he's not going to let superficial appearances
dictate his decisions.
Sometimes we wish our leaders
would go so far as opening their ears and their eyes.
But Jesus is well beyond that.
He sees every action and hears every plea,
but instead of giving us exactly what we ask for,
he gives us what we would ask for
if we knew everything that he knows.

And what does that result in?
Verse 4 tells us,

"With righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth."
Great wisdom and deep insight,
the fear of the Lord and God's Spirit resting on him,
makes Jesus favourably disposed to the poor.

Sometimes when a human is that full of care and love,
people are hesitant to put them in positions of leadership.
Leaders have to deal with the bad people.

To quote Mr Trump,
they have to drain the swamp.

And the question is,

"Does this person have what it takes
to deal firmly and decisively with evil?"

In the case of Jesus,

the answer is,

"Yes he does"

Verse 4 continues,

"He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked."

What happens to a world with that kind of leader?

A leader who tenderly cares for the little people
and decisively deals with the evil people.

Well the world becomes safe.

You look out there,

and you'd have to say the world doesn't look safe.

Look at the rates of domestic violence:

People aren't safe in their homes.

Look at the tension between nations:

people aren't safe from leaders who want to go to war.

Look at the number of substance affected drivers on the roads:

you are not safe in your car.

But we are given a beautiful picture of the kind of safety that comes when Jesus is our leader.

"The wolf will lay down with the lamb,
the leopard will lay down with the young goat,
and the calf and lion and the yearling together."

This isn't just a picture of ultimate safety.

It's a picture of safety where once there would have been dread.

"The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together."

Cows are looking for safety and security just like you and me.

But the way they find safety from bears
is to keep as far away from them as possible.

Jesus provides the kind of safety that is not steering clear of danger
it's transforming the dangerous to make them good.

Then the cow can feed with the bear in safety.

Jesus provides the kind of leadership that brings perfect peace.

Jesus is the king you can trust with your life.

I wonder if there are people here today
who are looking for that kind of leadership.

Because that's what Jesus is offering this Christmas.

Now the stuff about the wolf laying down with the lamb is future.

That's what life will be like when Jesus returns.

Jesus is coming back to bring about a world of justice and peace.

Total justice and peace.

But you can have that kind of leadership in your life now.

The same Jesus who will bring that justice and peace
is ready to come into your life now.

Have you been longing for a leader you can trust absolutely?

Jesus is ready to be that leader for you.

What does it take to have Jesus as your leader?

Well he's not going to twist your arm.

You have to say to him,

"Jesus I want you to be my leader."

Suppose you'd never before decided to follow Jesus
and you wanted to make that decision now.

If you want Jesus to be your leader,
this is the kind of prayer you'd pray.

"Lord Jesus,

I make a mess of trying to run my own life.

I've made a mess of trying to live without you.

I'd like you to come into my life and be my leader.

I need a leader who will keep me safe and secure.

I need a leader I can trust.

I need a leader like the shoot that comes up from the stump of Jesse.

And you are that kind of leader.

So please take my life and let me follow you.

Lord Jesus, I know that having you as my leader
means some things about me are going to have to change.

I'm ready for that.

I ask your forgiveness for the things that need to change.

I ask for the Spirit of the Lord to rest on me,

and make me more like you."

Now there could be someone here today
who wants to pray a prayer like that.

Someone who is ready to take Jesus on as their leader
for the first time this Christmas.

So I'm going to say that prayer again slowly,

line by line.

And if you'd like Jesus to be your leader,
then you can repeat that prayer in your heart,
and make it your own.

"Lord Jesus,

I make a mess of trying to run my own life.

I've made a mess of trying to live without you.

I'd like you to come into my life and be my leader.

I need a leader who will keep me safe and secure.

I need a leader I can trust.

I need a leader like the shoot that comes up from the stump of Jesse.

And you are that kind of leader.

So please take my life and let me follow you.

Lord Jesus, I know that having you as my leader
means some things about me are going to have to change.

I'm ready for that.

I ask your forgiveness for the things that need to change.

I ask for the Spirit of the Lord to rest on me,
and make me more like you."

Amen.

If you prayed that prayer,

please come and talk to me after the service.

I love to have the encouragement of seeing God at work in your life.

And I'd love to help you know

how to take the next steps in following Jesus.

But for now I'm going to finish by praying for all of us.

That we would find blessing

in following the wise King Jesus this Christmas.