



Notes for Adult discussion groups at  
On-Line@9 Worship Service  
9 December 2007

## STRANGE PARTNERS

### Isaiah 11:1-10 - The Peaceful Kingdom

<sup>1</sup>The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David's descendants.

<sup>2</sup>The spirit of the Lord will give him wisdom, and the knowledge and skill to rule his people.

He will know the Lord's will and have reverence for him, <sup>3</sup>and find pleasure in obeying him.

He will not judge by appearance or hearsay; <sup>4</sup>he will judge the poor fairly and defend the rights of the helpless.

At his command the people will be punished, and evil persons will die.

<sup>5</sup>He will rule his people with justice and integrity.

<sup>6</sup>Wolves and sheep will live together in peace, and leopards will lie down with young goats.

Calves and lion cubs will feed together, and little children will take care of them.

<sup>7</sup>Cows and bears will eat together, and their calves and cubs will lie down in peace.

Lions will eat straw as cattle do.

<sup>8</sup>Even a baby will not be harmed if it plays near a poisonous snake.

<sup>9</sup>On Zion, God's sacred hill, there will be nothing harmful or evil.

The land will be as full of knowledge of the Lord as the seas are full of water.

<sup>10</sup>A day is coming when the new king from the royal line of David will be a symbol to the nations. They will gather in his royal city and give him honour.

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### Strange Partners

- 1 What is "peace"? What does the word mean? Let's start at an international level. What would international peace look like? What would it mean for international players?

*Almost certainly, people will mention international wars, and tensions between races and creeds. Mention the Council for Reconciliation in South Africa, or the Peace Accord in N Ireland: both required parties to move toward the other and seek common ground. They had to become "strange partners" just as Isaiah overemphasised the metaphor in v6-8.*

- 2 What does "peace" mean at a community level? In our nation, town or village, what would peace look like? And what would that mean for people?

*Again, race and creed might be mentioned. Very locally, the Sustrans Bridleway from Addingham to Bolton Abbey has divided the village.*

- 3 What is peace for an individual? Among family and friends, what is "peace" and how is it achieved? What does this mean for each of us?

*Isaiah seems to suggest that it is the stronger partner who needs to move toward the weaker (v7b) but both need to move toward the other. There is a cost to both partners.*

- 4 What is Spiritual peace? Are we at peace with God? How can we be at peace with God?

*Jesus is the new king spoken of by Isaiah; he brings a peaceful kingdom. By recognising our sin (as Isaiah was reminding Judah), and bringing our lives to Jesus, we too can know that peace that then works out into our families, communities, nations and the world.*

### Background

The book of Isaiah is named after a great prophet who lived in Jerusalem in the latter half of the eighth century BC. This book may be divided into three principal parts (perhaps with three different authors). Chapters 1-39 come from a time when Judah, the southern kingdom, was threatened by a powerful neighbour, Assyria. Isaiah saw that the real threat to the life of Judah was not simply the might of Assyria, but the nation's own sin and disobedience to God, and their lack of trust in him. In vivid words and actions the prophet called the people and their leaders to a life of righteousness and justice, and warned that failure to listen to God would bring doom and destruction. *Isaiah also foretold a time of world-wide peace and the coming of a descendant of David who would be the ideal king.*

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