

■ The 115th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

In the preceding chapter, we hear of the arrogance and downfall of the Assyrian Empire: “The trees of Lebanon are cut down” (Isa 10:33-34). In contrast, this passage prophesies the arrival of a new era filled with hope: from the felled stump after God’s judgment a new shoot (the Messiah) will grow. Jesse, the father of King David (1 Sam 16:1), is referred to as the “stump of Jesse.” The hope given to the people of Judah is expressed in the image of a “shoot” from the Davidic line, a new king (the Messiah). His birth (Jesus) is described as a “branch” (Matt 1:1-17).

The “seven spirits” are: wisdom and discernment, the ability to see through things, planning and counsel, courage, communion with the Lord, fear of the Lord, and all these infused with “the Spirit of the Lord.”

Without relying on appearances or prejudice, the Messiah discerns truth by God’s Spirit? “not judging by what the eyes see.” He judges justly for the poor and the oppressed, defending the weak. He will defeat evil not with military power but with “the rod of his mouth,” the word of God (Rev 19:15). God’s word judges falsehood and “slays the wicked with the breath of his lips.”

Unyielding to injustice, he brings about God’s righteousness “the belt of righteousness around his waist.” Creatures once hostile will live in harmony: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb…” Peace without sin or death is expressed in the image of “an infant playing at the hole of a poisonous snake.” God’s dwelling place is called “the holy mountain,” and God’s wisdom and love will fill the world as “waters cover the sea.”

“The day” refers to the arrival of the Savior, when all peoples gather around a single “banner,” and God’s kingdom of glory and peace is fulfilled.

● Second Reading: Romans 15:4-9

In the early Church, conflict existed between Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul urges them, “Do not judge one another; accept one another” (Rom 14:13; 15:7). To teach the perseverance and consolation of God found in the Old Testament, he points to Abraham’s faith (Gen 15:1-20), the comfort in Job, the grace experienced in Exodus, and the consolation of Psalm 119 these are the “things written in former days.” God alone is the source of “steadfastness and encouragement,” the origin and fountain of hope (2 Cor 1:3-4).

The attitude of accepting and serving others reflects Christ (Phil 2:5-8; Mark 10:45). To glorify God together with one united purpose, believers are to be “of the same mind,” joining their hearts in unity (John 17:21), so that “with one heart and one voice” they may praise the Father. Accepting one another makes God’s glory visible.

Jesus welcomed sinners and the weak without discrimination (Luke 15; Rom 5:8), and believers imitate him by forgiving and accepting unconditionally. Jesus served the Jews (the circumcised) first, fulfilling God’s promise (Gen 12:3) through his birth and making God’s faithfulness His true word (Isa 55:11) visible and certain. Thus salvation extends to the Gentiles as well: “I will praise you among the Gentiles…” (Ps 18:50; 2 Sam 22:50), bringing universal salvation to the world.

● Gospel Reading: Matthew 3:1-12

This passage depicts the “preparation for salvation” before Jesus’ coming. After about 400 years of divine silence since the prophet Malachi, God sends John the Baptist as the one who prepares the way for the Messiah. His birth was foretold by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:13), and he lived a life of prayer and ascetic discipline.

“Repentance” means turning one’s life around and returning to God. God’s reign is near, and the phrase “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” serves as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. The spiritual preparation to welcome Jesus the King is “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness” (Isa 40:3).

John’s clothing and diet follow the example of the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8). His preaching and simplicity drew many

people. At that time, breaking the Law was considered sin, and forgiveness was associated with sacrifices or ritual washings. When Pharisees and Sadducees whose faith had become formalistic came merely to observe his baptisms, he rebuked them as “brood of vipers.” Good works born from inner transformation justice, mercy, and righteousness are “the fruit of repentance.”

Their claim, “We have Abraham as our father,” is rejected; salvation comes not by lineage but by faith. Because God has creative power and sovereignty, John says God can “raise up children from stones,” and he calls faith-inspired good works “good fruit.”

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