

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Second Sunday in Advent – December 7, 2025

“¹There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ²And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”

- Isaiah 11:1-2 -

The botanical life of most trees is amazing. Often when a tree is damaged and the trunk is cut down, a new shoot will come up out of the stump or roots. So long as the roots are healthy, it will try to live. It will put out new shoots and eventually try to flower and reproduce. It keeps adapting to its circumstances and tries its best to thrive.

One of my favorite activities is to be out in nature, especially walking or hiking through a forest. Ever since I was a young girl, I spent a lot of time in Fontenelle Forest of Bellevue, Nebraska, where I grew up. I hiked with my parents and grandparents. My husband and I had our engagement photos taken in Fontenelle Forest. And now, when I go back to visit, I take my kids to the forest. I had a very special relationship with my maternal grandfather. I loved holding his hand as we walked the trails, and later on, we walked the boardwalk through the forest as his body didn't allow him to walk on the uneven trails anymore. My grandpa knew a lot about nature and God's creation.

One time we were walking along, and I noticed how several trees had been cut down. My grandpa said it could be that they were diseased, or they were at risk of falling over on the boardwalk. I mentioned it was a little sad to see them cut down, but then I saw something. It was bright green, and it appeared to be growing out of the crack in the middle of the stump. Grandpa said it was a new shoot. The roots were continuing to produce, and out of what appeared to be dead, well, there was new life. Grandpa said it would eventually grow into its own tree.

I think of that moment every time I revisit these words from Isaiah 11. Jesse, his son David, and David's son Solomon were gone. What appeared to be left of that family tree was nothing but a dead stump. But wait! Isaiah says God will grow a brand-new shoot out of that stump. It will produce a Branch. And the Branch will produce fruit. This Branch would eventually be known to us as the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The lineage of David would continue on as God would give us a brand-new David in Jesus Christ. In Him there is life and salvation, and we know that death no longer has its grip on us.