



“Stumps, Shoots, & Nurse Logs”

Sunday, January 24th

□ 10 minutes. Go on a walk or sit outside.

While you are outside, see if you can find a stump. Better yet, see if you can find a stump with a shoot of growth coming out of it. As you look at the stump reflect on your own broken dreams, disappointments, wounds, and experiences of alienation and failure. Reflect on the ways you have not been the person you wanted to be. Reflect on how the world is not the way it should be. In what way are you like this stump? In what way is the world like this stump?

The Bible begins and ends with the tree of life (Genesis 2:9; Genesis 3:22; Revelation 22:1-3). In the beginning of the Bible, humanity quickly loses access to the tree of life because they have digested the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. That fruit is more than they can metabolize on their own. Creation and relationships unravel.

The tree of life is depicted in the stories and art of the ancient Near East as a plant called *“the old man becomes young”*. The prophet Isaiah depicted his people as a stump cut down, ruined, uninhabited, deserted, and ravaged (Isaiah 6:11-13). Isaiah envisioned a shoot of fresh growth coming out of that old chopped off stump (Isaiah 11:1). Isaiah saw that shoot of new growth coming from the stump of Jesse as a person of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the Lord, with the spirit of God resting on him, and giving decisions of justice for the poor and needy of the earth. Isaiah saw a new world coming where none would ever again harm or destroy, a world where weapons were transformed into tools of cultivation, and where all the nations would rally to the Root of Jesse (Isaiah 11; Isaiah 2:1-5).

The story of the Bible ends with the same tree of life offering fruit in every season, available for the healing of the nations. The planet that was cursed with thorns, conflict, and pain is no longer cursed (Revelation 22:1-3).

Reflect on the stump in front of you, and the growth coming out of it. What is the stump and shoot of growth telling you about God and about our world?

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord- and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with justice and righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.” – Isaiah 11:1-4

