

# *A Thrill of Hope* in a Weary World

## Week Two: Whispers of Hope

### Read Isaiah 11:1-10

"A shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse..."

Is there anything more hopeless than a stump?

Depending on the size of the tree when it was cut down or otherwise met its demise, the stump can be a hidden tripping hazard along the way, or a giant platform bearing witness to the beauty that once was.



In both cases, however, a stump implies the end of something that once had life, hope, and meaning. A tree giving shade, bearing fruit, offering shelter to creatures great and small become a dried, dead thing suitable only for sitting on (or tripping over).

**Unless, of course, we remember that God can bring new life out of even the most hopeless of situations.** Unless, of course, we remember the promise of the tiny shoot springing forth out of the cracked, dead stump. A tiny shoot representing hope in the midst of despair. A tiny shoot defying the odds to raise it's head and say, "I am here."

Again we are hearing the "nice" version of Isaiah in this week's reading. He's been proclaiming a whole lot of bad news to the people of God. And yet, Isaiah, thanks be to God, pauses now and again to remind the people that no matter how endless the storm of destruction may seem, no matter how powerful death's jaws might feel, the power, might, love, mercy, and compassion of God are greater.

*(Devotion continues on next page)*





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"A shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse..." And because of that tiny sign of hope, a grand new vision of peace will creep its way in, on the soft paws of lions and baby goats, bears and cows, and the pitter-patter of little children's feet running harmlessly over the adder's den.

The power of hope isn't that it draws our attention away from the difficulties life offers or that it minimizes the pain and suffering that so many endure. **The power of hope rests in the defiant belief that the difficulties, pain, and suffering aren't all there is.** The power of hope is what compels us to take one more breath, one more step; to sing one more note in a song of resistance against the power of despair. And to do so trusting that we are not alone, that others will come alongside of us, whispering, singing, shouting God's promises into our hearts and minds until they become real to us as well.

The power of hope is what moves us to offer what we have, even if it seems like a tiny shoot sticking out of a giant stump – small, meaningless, yet defiantly there nonetheless.

"A shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse" and "On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious."

**May we find and be whispers of hope in the weary world this week.**

## *Signs of Hope in the SCSW*

### **Hunger Ministries in the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin**

In late October we invited congregations and ministries in the SCSW to share about hunger-related ministries. We were overwhelmed by the responses we received! We shared many of these ministries on the synod Facebook page in an effort to raise awareness of where, when, and how people in need could find immediate assistance in their area. That was only a fraction of the incredible work our congregations are doing to help alleviate hunger in their communities and around the world. You told stories of community partnerships, packing backpacks for area schoolchildren, senior meals, pop-up food pantries, the Holy Cow "pay as you can" food truck, and so much more. Your commitment to following the many biblical commands to feed the hungry is overwhelming.

**Well done, good and faithful servants!**