

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16

The Dead Come Back to Life

Jeremiah 33:15-16a (EHV)

In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous Branch to grow up from David's line. He will establish justice and righteousness on earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In northern California, you can visit some of the largest trees on the face of the earth. Giant sequoias tower over 300 feet above the forest floor! A single branch from one of these trees measures 150 feet long. Their trunks can measure over 20 feet around. These ancient trees are huge!

When a giant sequoia gets sick and dies, it needs to be cut down. What's left behind is a massive stump—dead and decaying. Yet if your family were to drive through a sequoia forest, you would see something very surprising. You would find a giant stump with all kinds of “stump sprouts” growing out of it, basically little sequoia trees growing up from the dead stump. In a sense, the dead tree comes back to life.

God used a similar picture to describe his Old Testament people hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus. Like a giant sequoia, Israel had once been a mighty nation ruled by King David, a faithful follower of the Lord. Yet the nation became spiritually sick as many of the kings who followed David trusted in other gods. Eventually, like a dead tree, their kingdom was destroyed. They no longer had a king. Many were sent far away from home.

The people felt sad and hopeless, but the Lord made a promise. A *righteous Branch* would *grow up from David's line*. Like a “stump sprout,” a King would come from David's family to give life to God's people. He will save them from their sins, so they could live with him forever. That King would be our Savior Jesus.

Sometimes we feel sad and hopeless. A friend moves away, or we move away. A family member or friend passes away. Maybe we see our parents, brother, or sister feeling sad or worried. It makes us afraid. We wonder if things will ever get better. In that moment, our hope feels dead like a stump.

But do you remember God's promise? If he can cause living trees to grow up from dead stumps, Jesus can bring us back to life when we feel hopeless. Jesus came into our world to forgive our sins. He came to wipe away our tears. He came to comfort us when we feel sad and protect us when we feel scared. Jesus came to give us hope in him—not an “I hope so” hope, but an “I know so” hope. Jesus came to bring us back to life.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- How would you describe a tree stump? (*Answer: dead*) What does a stump sprout indicate? (*Answer: life*)
- Why is it important that Jesus is like a stump sprout?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How was the kingdom of Israel like a dead stump?
- What is the difference between an “I hope so” hope and an “I know so” hope?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Why is God’s promise to bring life from a dead stump so important for us?
- Discuss what makes you afraid of dying. Why should the season of Advent make you less afraid?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, you are the righteous Branch. Thank you for coming into our world to give us life and restore our hope. Help us to trust in you and your promises always. Amen.