

Monday

John 15:1-8

December 17

***I Am the True Vine***

*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. John 15:4*

When you're a kid, it can be kind of fun to get dirty. Children are rarely concerned with having dirt on their pants, spaghetti sauce on their face, or untidy hair. As we get older and more conscious of the world around us, however, we desire to present ourselves well to the world. We want to be neat and tidy. We want to be clean.

With a word, Jesus makes you cleaner than you've ever been; cleaner than you could ever make yourself. With a word, Jesus draws you to Himself and makes you holy. Jesus is so clean that He has a tendency to rub off on those who associate with Him. Jesus has spoken to the very core of who you are and has begun the good work of making you clean and holy on the inside, the place where your thoughts and actions are born. As one made clean by Jesus' word, your life reflects the holiness of Jesus! Your words are caring and heartening to those who are needing your kind assurance. Your actions strive to support and strengthen those in your life! You have been made clean by the word and work of Jesus Christ in your life. Take your good and clean words and actions out into the world. The world needs you.

*True Vine, you make me clean. Send me out with your good word. Amen.*

Wednesday

Jeremiah 23:5-8

December 19

***A Righteous Branch***

*I'll raise to David a righteous branch; a King to reign & prosper. Jeremiah 23:5*

From the long dead line of a seemingly broken lineage and kingdom, a mere stump in the forest of lofty oak trees, shoots forth a sapling. So insignificant in size to those around as to be completely unnoticed. Soon the sapling grew in stature and in favor with God and men. That dead old family tree was granted new life and began to branch once more.

Coming from the line of such great kings as David and Solomon and Ahaz and Hezekiah and Josiah, this new branch, this new King would be the King of kings and Lord of lords. A branch that continues to grow and cast its gentle shadow of peace throughout all the land.

Jesus is that Righteous Branch in the family tree of King David. Jesus is the One who rules the everlasting Kingdom of God Almighty! His rule is one of peace and justice, life and love, joy and happiness. His Kingdom extends to the end of creation into the New Creation; from the end of time into the Age to Come! His Kingdom has branched out and welcomed in sinners like you. Bringing you into His eternal reign, King Jesus envelops you in the shade of His comforting Gospel of hope and life!

*O Righteous Branch, shade me in the love of Your Kingdom. Amen.*

Tuesday

Matthew 3:1-8

December 18

***Bear the Fruit of Repentance***

*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 3:2*

While certainly a time of joyful anticipation for our coming Christmas celebrations, Advent is also a time of repentant preparation because Christ's coming is at hand! One important form that this preparation takes is that of confession and absolution.

In preparing for the advent of Christ's ministry, John the Baptist preached an unpopular message: "Repent!" Repentance is not just a one-time event but an ongoing fruit of faith through Christ, our Vine. Day after day we flee to Him, seeking His forgiveness where we have done wrong, and His grace to cover us, uplift us, and strengthen us in the face of temptation.

John the Baptist preached this message to everyone who would listen. The call to "Repent!" continues to go out to every single one of us. So where in your life do you need to bear the fruit of repentance? What do you need to confess to your Lord? How do you need to pray for the Holy Spirit's help with changing your thoughts, words, and actions? *Do so*, and then live this day trusting in God's baptismal grace for you! He forgives you all your sins! For Jesus' sake, He treasures you as His dearly loved son or daughter!

*Jesus, lead me in repentant living and grant me the joy of Your forgiveness. Amen.*

Thursday

Colossians 2:6-10

December 20

***Rooted in Christ***

*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith. Colossians 2:7*

You are blessed in your journey of faith to know Christ, to grow in Him, and to show Him to the world! Today's word from the Apostle Paul especially addresses your *growth* in Christ. God's Spirit first "rooted" you in Christ when He led you to saving faith. However, your faith is always under attack by the real and destructive forces of the devil, the world, and your own sinful nature, seeking to uproot your life in Christ. Paul especially warns you about how such worldly and deceitful teachings can ensnare you (v. 8). This is all the more reason to sink your roots *deeper* in Christ, growing in Him through a steady diet of faith-building food: exploring His Word, living out your baptismal relationship with Him, receiving His gifts for your soul in the Lord's Supper, and sharing in the life of His body, the Church. Christ *promises* to nourish your faith in these ways! And the deeper your roots grow in Christ, the better you will be able to withstand times of trouble and possible threats to your faith. This is a lifelong journey – and joy – to continue putting down roots in your relationship with your Savior and in His love for you!

*Lord, help my faith to continue digging deeper into Christ. Amen.*

Friday

Revelation 1:12-18

December 21

***I Am Alive Forevermore***

*When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead. He laid His right hand on me. Rev. 1:17*

At first, he didn't recognize his old Friend. Admittedly, it had been many decades since he had last seen Him in the flesh. But to see Him again, to hear that dear voice speaking to him as when he was a mere disciple, John collapsed with joy and fear!

This same reaction happened at Jesus' resurrection when those brave soldiers guarding His tomb against any shenanigans Jesus' disciples might bring about fell as dead men when Jesus burst from the grave. Now John falls as though dead! To the side of the disciple whom He loved, Jesus went like in days of old to heal and reassure John. He placed His hand, His right hand, His nail-marked right hand on John and restored Him completely.

Jesus chose this faithful servant to witness an apocalyptic vision and bring it to the world. This was to be Jesus' final Word; the sealing book of the Holy Scriptures. In this revelation, Jesus would preview for all who read it the End Times and the End itself. John diligently recorded everything His Master and Teacher shared with him. Through it, we hear the dear voice of our Savior speaking to us: "Behold, I am coming soon!"

*O Living One, come soon and rescue us to eternal life. Amen.*

Saturday

Galatians 5:22-25

December 22

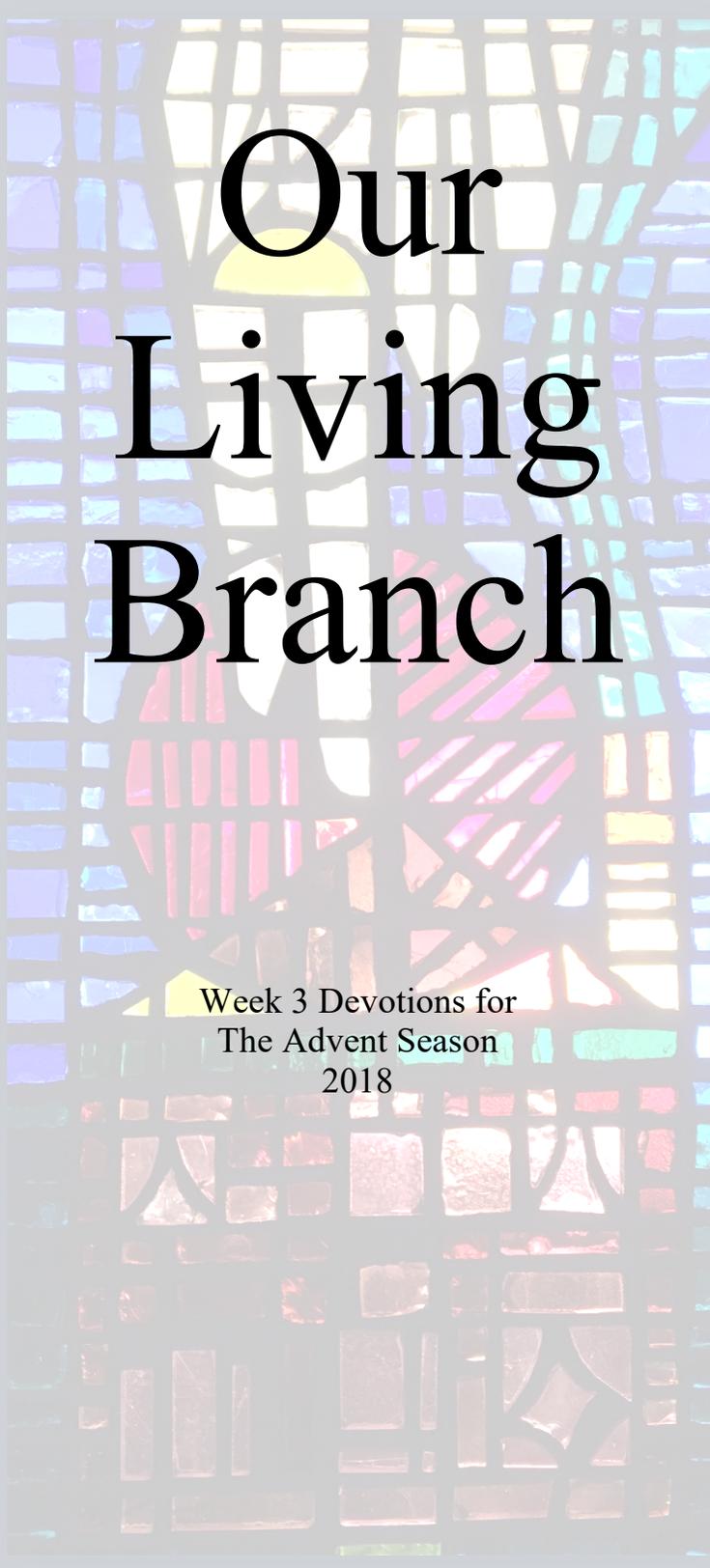
***The Fruit of the Spirit***

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22-23*

Here's a Christmas basket brimming with nine beautiful fruits! Both individually and as a whole, these fruits are descriptions of a Christian life. However, before these words can characterize you and me, they *first* describe Christ Himself! "The greatest of these is love" Paul emphasizes (1 Cor. 13:13). *Christ's love* for you is sacrificial, unconditional, and eternal! He finds *joy in you* (Luke 15:7) and even in facing the cross for you! (Heb. 12:2) His *peace* surpasses understanding (Phil. 4:7), re-establishing the relationship between God and man! (Luke 2:14) Each of the remaining fruits also describes Jesus' love toward you!

As we approach Christmas, consider again these nine fruits and gifts of God's Spirit. You might pick one fruit in particular to grow in, to express your faith, and to share as a gift with others this Christmas season. What'll it be for you? Kindness? Faithfulness? Gentleness? As Jesus has blessed you in all these ways, you, in turn, bless your neighbors as you develop these Christ-like fruits!

*Jesus, thank You for Your patience and goodness and all the wonderful fruits of Your great love! Send Your Holy Spirit to help me grow in fruitfulness! Amen.*



# Our Living Branch

Week 3 Devotions for  
The Advent Season  
2018