

# First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

December 3, 2017 - Advent 1

## **Scripture Reading:** John 6:37-45

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; 38 for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day." 41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

## **Congregational Prayer:** Lord's Prayer: "Our Father"

Our Father, Which Art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever and ever. AMEN

## **Message:** The Jesus Tree of Creation

I want to take you back to time before time. Not just before you and I were here, or even before the earth and the sky, and all the stars and all the planets. I want to take you back to a time before time even began – the time before creation.

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1). Can you imagine the scene as God the Father is there with God the Son and God the

Holy Spirit and it's time to start creation? Can you imagine God the Father saying to His precious Son "All things will be created from You, my Beloved." (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16)

With the authority of God the Father, and the power of the Holy Spirit, God the Son, Jesus, turns and starts to breath the universe into existence (Genesis 1:3. Psalm 33:9). With but a Word, suddenly our sun exists. With but a thought the Milky Way quicky is our home galaxy. And there in the midst of it all God created this pale blue dot - we call it the Earth. In six days of creation our God creates everything from the single celled amoeba to the ocean teeming with life, to plains and valleys filled with all sorts of wonderful animals and plant life. When he finally comes to the creation of the first people, God rests with the words, "It is very good! (Genesis 131)"

Now I want to tell you the story of a tree. It's simply an imaginary story, of course, but it's about a tree that has five significant parts to its life.

### Part One – The Jesus Tree of Creation

Just before God rested at the end of the sixth day, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit looked at God the Son and saw Jesus hesitate just a bit. On His majestic face Jesus seems to be in deep thought. "Jesus, what is wrong? Are you not pleased having created the precious man and woman that we love so much and are created in our image?" Jesus thought for just a small portion of time and said quietly but determinedly, "They are magnificent - truly the people are the best of creation. But I've one more thing I want to create. It is The Tree." God

the Father and God the Holy Spirit knew exactly what tree Jesus was referring to. It took a flash of time for them to join Jesus at a special spot just south of Mount Zion - just outside of God's mountain. There in an open field Jesus knelt down and created a little tiny tree. It was not made differently from the others. It was not created in a special place like on top of a mountain or separated off with some sort of monument to indicate that it was special so that people would come to honour this tree. Instead, as a final step in creation, this tree was one created by Him to only be significant to Jesus.

As we step into Advent, think about how Jesus is the One through whom all things were created. Jesus is the One who is so powerful, and yet so peace-loving and joyful that there is nothing in heaven and earth, there is nothing in the vast universe that is beyond His precious sight.

#### Part Two – The Manger

That little tiny tree that Jesus planted on the last day of creation on the mountain range grew and grew and grew. Its trunk was thick, weatherbeaten, and worn from occasional snowstorms and floods (including a rather enormous flood), and hail and days and days of golden sunshine. It's leaves reached to the heavens and even it's smallest branches became as big as the trunk of most trees. It grew until it touched the sky. Generation after generation, century after century passed as the tree grew powerful and mighty.

But like all things in creation, one day it started to wither as it sat there in a field now owned by local carpenter, a Hebrew from the tribe of King David,.

And after many more centuries, it dried in the sun. Every day the people of the nearby town, Bethlehem, would look to the mountain and see the old tree slowly wither, each one knowing it was a very special tree.

For many generations that old tree continued to shrivelled up in the sun and wind, until one day Zadok, the son of Azor came with his son Akim and grandson Eliud (Matthew 1:14) and all their families with them, and sent to work in cutting up that massive tree. By the time they were done, huge piles of beams, boards, and miscellaneous wood was piled in the special storage room in the back of their carpenter shop in Bethlehem.

There was something about that wood that the family knew was very special, therefore, even though it took up a lot of space, that lumber was rarely used.

Two more generations went by until one day, when the family was faced with hard times, and packed up everything, realizing that they had to make a go north to Galilee to where others in the family line had moved. But the innkeeper in Bethlehem convinced Matthan (Matthew 1:15) to do one last job and finish up his new stable. Inside that barn of the Inn Matthan was hired to make one last item before he could move his family north – Matthan had to make a manger. Unfortunately, because everything else was either packed or was gone, the carpenter could only find wood left from that old tree. Leaving the huge beams behind, but using some smaller pieces, Matthan fashioned one last item in his carpentry shop, placed it in the inn's stable, and with that manger being finished, Matthan had enough money to move his family up north to Galilee, to Nazareth.

Little did Matthan know that his grandson Joseph (Matthew 1:16) would one day return to Bethlehem. He would not return to live. Nor would he return to reopen the long closed carpenter shop of his family heritage, but Joseph would come back to Bethlehem because of a census called by Caesar Augustus, and he and his wife, Mary, would take refuge in that same stable of that same inn, and there give birth to the long-awaited Messiah. And, because there was no other place, they laid their newborn baby in the same manger fashioned by Joseph's grandfather years before. Under the bright light of the beam from the star in the heavens above, the family was surrounded by shepherds singing, as did the angels, "*Glory to God in the Highest!*"

### Part Three – The Carpenter Shop

Joseph, son of Jacob, grandson of Matthan, could not stay with Mary and the newborn baby, Jesus, the Messiah, in Bethlehem for very long. They escaped to the safety of Egypt to get away from the wickedness of King Herod and his evil ways, narrowly escaping the death of their child by the sword. Joseph then took his family back to Nazareth when the death of Herod allowed him this freedom, and there he set back to work at his family's carpenter shop. With his young son, Jesus, playing at his feet, and learning the trade, Joseph would have been a busy man working in the area, and at nearby Sepphoris, a Roman town in Galilee.

In the next few years, Joseph and his family returned often to Jerusalem for the holy festivals, one time even losing Jesus, only to find him in the Temple teaching the wise men of the day. And, since he had relatives in Bethlehem, and

since Bethlehem was only 15 miles from the heart of Jerusalem, Joseph and his family would occasionally stay in Bethlehem. It was there, going through the rubble of his ancestor's old carpenter shop, that Joseph came upon the huge beams and small bits and pieces of an especially stored cache of lumber. The huge beams he left behind, but Joseph took as many of the smaller pieces of wood with him as he could carry back to Nazareth, and he fashioned some marvellous treasures out of them. His son, Jesus was quick to learn, and together they made some highly prized carvings and furniture. But every time Jesus used a piece of lumber from His special tree, He knew its significance. He knew this was The Tree - His Tree. He knew this wood was from the Jesus Tree of Creation, the biggest pieces of which were still in Bethlehem.

### Part 4 - The Cross

The Romans were highly skilled at keeping the population under control. Any attempt at an uprising was met with a quick, often insincere trial, followed by crucifixion. And the Romans were masters at crucifixion. They knew that if you have anyone with outstretched arms for any length of time, that inhaling would become very difficult. They knew that impaling somebody with nails in the right place would inflict pain beyond belief. They knew just when to break bones in the legs of those were suffering on the cross so that death would come quickly as a breath became impossible.

But crosses took lumber. Certainly, they can reuse a cross, or even just hanging someone in a living tree, but eventually the Romans needed more wood.

And that is how the next piece of the Jesus Tree of Creation ended up outside of Jerusalem one Friday, more than 2000 years ago. On the hills of Calvary, the One through whom the entire universe was created, the One who was born in a stable, the One who was the little boy from the carpenter shop in Galilee was hung as a common criminal on that same special tree that He had planted Himself on the last day of creation. Just outside of the city of Jerusalem, the carpenter who had grown to become the Rabbi, who had preached, taught, healed, and demonstrated the love of God the Father for more than three years of ministry, was pierced onto the beams of that special tree as a common criminal. His crime: Jesus dared to preach the truth in love. Jesus spoke the Word of Truth about the Heavenly Father. Jesus dared to defy human laws, upholding the way of His Father. For this, Jesus was called a blasphemer. As the slivers of the beam from his special tree dug into his back and his arms and his legs, Jesus, the Messiah, whispered out loud: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34).”*

#### Part Five – By The Sea

The disciples of Jesus had watched it all. Some had fled and were quite far away, only hearing bits and pieces of the story of the death of Jesus, while others had lingered just around the corner, and the few stayed and stood there at the feet of Jesus, watching Him die as His mother cried. How very difficult it was for them over the next three days to understand the death of the Rabbi, Jesus, the Messiah. They knew that Jesus was the Christ. It was therefore very hard for

them to understand what He was dead, and how this fit into God’s master plan.

But on that Easter Sunday, the earth shook, the soldiers ran away, the tomb that held the broken body of Jesus was found to be empty. No one, from the Romans, to the Governor (Pontus Pilate), could find the dead body of Jesus.

The reason for that was simple – Jesus was very much alive! He appeared to the women who came to the tomb that Sunday morning to finish the ceremony of preparing His body for death, and He appeared to the disciples in the locked Upper Room, and He appeared to two men walking along the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). One day Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberius (John 21). It happened this way: The disciples of Jesus went out to fish all night but caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore. In His hands were some fish, a loaf of bread, and some beaten up, tired pieces of wood - the remains of the last of the Jesus Tree of Creation that He Himself had planted. Jesus asked the disciples if they had caught any fish, and they said no. Jesus then told them to throw their nets on the right side of the boat, assuring them that they will find some fish there. When they did, they were unable to halt the net in because of the large number of fish.

Jesus, of course, knew this was happening. But He was busy – He was cooking up some breakfast for them. Taking the last bits of the Jesus Tree of Creation, Jesus used it’s wood one final time.

Staring into the embers of the glow of the fire, Jesus invited His disciples to

have breakfast.

Jesus would eat with His disciples other times over the next 40 days. Each time that they saw Jesus, they could still smell the fumes from the Jesus Tree of Creation, and they could still see the smoke billowing up from it to heaven. On the last day, Jesus gave them His authority, telling them that they: *“...will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them; and they will be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).”* After He said this, Jesus was taken up before their very eyes, lifted from this Earth in much the same way as the smoke from the burning of the last of the Jesus Tree of Creation floated heavenward. And, although Jesus is in all places at all times, that day Jesus took his rightful place on His throne at the right-hand of God the Father. And we all know what that throne was made of. And that is the story of Jesus Tree of Creation.

So.. There is the story I wrote about Jesus. Maybe you received nothing from it, thinking that it was just a story. Or maybe you saw the threads of truth - Jesus is not just the baby born in the stable as pictured on the Christmas Cards you sent out - He was more than that. It is this same Jesus who was there at Creation, breathing life into emptiness. It was Jesus who made the decision to leave the glory of heaven to save us from ourselves, from our sin, and rescue us from death - eternal death - to give us life - eternal life.

Would you take from this story the joy of the Creator. Would you take from this story the joy of the Saviour who freely gave up His life for you. Would you take from this story the sweet joy of being able to be fully alive today and forever because of the sacrifice and defeat of death of Jesus, the creator, the carpenter, who was crucified as the only One who could atone for your sins and mine.

Advent is a time stop. It's a time to look back at the first coming of Jesus and marvel at the plan of God. Advent is a time to await His certain return in the near future. Advent is therefore a time to reassess our souls, asking if we are ready, today, to say yes to Jesus, to change our life. Advent is about surrendering control to Jesus. Do you want to live an abundant life? Are you ready to be with Jesus for eternity? Thanks be to God who gives us life!