

*The Advent Of The Lord Is Now...US!*

*“I Am Wondering...But I Am Not  
Stumped!”*

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 21:25-36  
November 28, 2021  
First Week of Advent

What do you really know about your family tree?

Can you name the generations that came before you?

What do you know about them...can you sum up your impression of any one of them or a single generation in a simple sentence or two?

Well, know this...even though you may not know the family stories of those who came before you, those stories are playing out in you right now.

Family attitudes...sometimes about very specific things like loyalty at all costs, prejudices, favorites/unfavorites, even divorce patterns and the rights/privileges of children...family attitudes and choices flow through the generations subconsciously and are present even if not told out loud or even known.

They affect you and often shape you and will be repeated by you until they are brought up in your consciousness for what they are, why they are...how to live with them not through them. Soul Work.

We see this at holidays especially...and maybe thinking of your holiday traditions (and your responses to them) may spark some aha! in you around this assertion I am making.

And so, what do you know of your own birthing story?

Do you know the circumstances of your birth?

Do you know what was going on in your family at the time of your birth?

The mood of your mother or father, the strains and joys that were present?

They were born into you as you were born into them.

You weren't born into a vacuum. Stories matter. Knowing the stories, we can see more clearly what has been forming us and then more clearly make life choices.

Yes! You are an off shoot from a branch from a branch from a branch of your family...tree.

Jesus and you have this in common. The stories of the generations before Him helped define Him. BUT, when those stories were not helpful to Him in standing in his own light and life with integrity, he moved out from them with courage and lived a new truth in his world family.

Born through Mary and Joseph, he was born to the Holy Family...of humanity.

Perhaps this season as we reflect on the context of Jesus birth, you will reflect on the context of yours...and how you are still being shaped by it...and how you may hold these stories differently now and now begin to re-define yourself. Re-order your life. Save yourself. How you will resist and be renewed. Hey! Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.

Stumped?

Well...speaking of stumps....

The stump Jesus...the family tree from which Jesus comes wasn't very grand...remember Naomi and Ruth and Jesse?

Branch from a branch...

I wonder what trees...fig trees, all trees...can tell us about family trees.....about life and death and renewed life...

especially during Advent.

Yes, new shoots do come from old stumps...in fact, new shoots often sprout best if the tree has been cut back/pruned. And, new shoots only come from the stumps.....that stay rooted.

Sounds like a metaphor to me!

There are sure a lot of times in my life when I've been stumped!

What to do? How to respond?

How to stay alive when I've been cut off at ground level and all my best branches and greenery thrown away. Times I've felt dead inside. And sometimes...I haven't grown back.

In fact, if I think about it...the only times I've ever been able to grow back are when I have stayed aware of the fact I am rooted in something much bigger and more important and powerful than I am...

even more powerful than my circumstances,  
my family, and its stories!

It's only when I've realized I can't do it on my own and resisted pulling back and isolating myself...uprooting myself!

...it's only when I've stayed grounded in the belief God is still with me and I'm important to God...

even in my pain and failure...

even when I feel cut off from life...stumped by life...

it's only then

I've been able to sprout new branches  
and grow life. See things differently.

...like the time I went unemployed and couldn't figure out what was so wrong with me and cried out loud to God, humbly praying all the time...and then God brought me...to Tippe!

Or the time I could not figure out how to help Nick when he was so upset as a little boy...and God invited me to figure out myself and support Nick instead of try to figure it out and fix Nick.

To see Nick as God does and deeply know him differently.

Oh, yeah...and the time I tried to figure out how to handle the budget deficit here years ago and began to panic because I couldn't ...and then God tapped me on the shoulder and said: It's not your problem Karen...trust the people to know what to do...now.

Yeah, you/Tippe has to stay rooted in the "more" ...especially when we've been cut back and stumped.

God knows stumped.

People have cut God off and out for years...  
but God isn't defined by worldly cuts.

God sprouts up again and again through the prophets until God figures it out..."Oh, if I move from the voice of prophets to the babe in a manger, grow up and actually hang out with them,

showing them the way, maybe then...

these shoots of new life will finally take root.

And so God in Jesus comes from the stump of Jesse....David's dad.....not from David the King but from his dad, Jesse the shepherd.

(You have to look back a few generations to see how you're rooted in your story.)

With God's coming as Jesus, came hope and new ways/choices...

a way to balance out the wolf and lamb within by feeding them

a new diet,

a way to let the child within lead us to God's Holy Mountain...

the new Eden not because it's perfect,

but because you are there and you care!

God will tame within us what is wild and show us a way to integrity and the fruits of faithfulness...when we stay rooted.

We practice these ways as we grow up again with Jesus through the cycle of the stories of the liturgical year. And now in Advent, we

gain new wisdom about how to live a life

of peace, love, joy, and faith.

Are you beginning to get this stumped stuff, now?

But here's where the tree from God's creation/Mother-Father Nature loses its metaphor:

The new shoot that came from Jesse's stump can never be cut off again...because the new shoot is Jesus and Jesus is with us always...cannot be uprooted from within us... even if we try to do the cutting!

Jesus is the vine of life...remember..."I am the vine, you are the branches...Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit....because apart from me (uprooted!) you can do nothing...

but if you abide in me, and my words abide in you,  
ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

...if you'll live connected...resist and renew...if you remember...  
Advent's instructions for living a life...

\*When I am stumped, remember where I am rooted.

\*If I'm cut down, remember where my life is always renewed.

\*When I am feeling threatened, remember to resist and ask for what I need.

\*If I am left feeling alone, remember I am connected to the true vine of life...Jesus!  
...and Tippe!

\*When my family acts up and out, remember I was born through them, not to them.

You are a part of the Holy Family of Humanity...not really a Fortier, Kehl, Fleming, Watkins at all!!! You are a child of God!

So...

I wonder if remembering all this "stump stuff" isn't just the best way I can begin to prepare for the birth of Jesus again this year.  
To resist?

I wonder what Jesus will grow in me this year? Renew in me?

I wonder what new shoots God longs to grow from the old stumps of my life...if only I will let God take root in me?

Will I pay attention?

Will I let myself be astonished?

Will I tell about it?

I do have what I need to move toward Christmas...

I shall not want...nor shall I rush!

Advent is taking place around me! It's in me!

The Advent of our Lord is me! ...US!

Holy One, You are here!