Sermon- Advent 2 2019

Title- “Oh Blessed Shoot!”

Text- Isa. 11:1-10

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

**I’ve lived in the old “church house” on the LCEF property on the other side of the hill behind us for 7 years now. The time has gone quickly, and I’ve seen many changes over there. One thing are the trees. On the South side, by the fence of the pasture, there used to be ten Bradford Pear trees. You know the kind; they grow fast, have abundant leaves and look great- for a time. Now there are but seven of these trees. Three have been cut down and the rest have been subject to the ravages of the wind. Multiple limbs have had to be cut by the previous owner, Charlie, who keeps his cattle in the pasture and maintains the fences. You see, Bradford Pears are very weak. Charlie rues the day he planted them there, because they are a lot of work. They are just like us you see, fragile, weak, and prone to being cut down. Every time I call him and tell him another limb has fallen on the fence he just says, “Oh shoot!”**

**We humans have been subject to that condition since the fall. Just like John the Baptist, Isaiah knew this when he wrote what he did. He saw us weak, sinful humans, compared to the Holiness of God. The OT writers used imagery we modern humans rarely do, but in these verses, Isaiah repeats what all of the other prophets have, and it is this: That Israel is sinful, and God is not. He hates sin, and He wants to be reconciled to us, who seem to love sin. Therefore, on “That Day”, past, present and future, He will send a sprout, a “Blessed Shoot” from the tribe of Jesse, to save the world and reconcile us to Him.**

**Law**

**On the row of those trees, the front one by the street was blown over and instead of cutting it down at the ground level, because his saw blade was not long enough, Charlie cut it down where the tree cracked. This is about four feet above the ground. This occurred about six years ago. The creation, as I said before, is just like us and suffers just like us. It breaks, too, being weak. Jesse was the father of King David, who was just as weak as any of us and it seemed that out of pride and other reasons, the tribe of King David, Judah, Isaiah said, was to suffer at the hand of God because of their sin. The tree of David’s kingdom would be struck down, just like the one Charlie cut down six years ago. However, Isaiah writes of a “Shoot”, a sprout that grew out of the stump. That happened to that tree by the road, too. It doesn’t think it is dead. Out of that four-foot-tall stump, a new tree has come from a “supposed” dead one! It now looks like a short Bradford Pear, and I have decided that it just needs to grow.**

**And God has done this for us in this “Shoot”, for us sinners, who are just like the tribe of Judah. Like trees, we rot! We rotten sinners, who are proud, and self-indulgent, callous and so sinful, that we can’t see the forest for the trees. We need to get down on our knees, humble ourselves and repent. Our problem with sin is not just a national, corporate sin, for there are many, but an individual, personal sin, that needs to be forgiven. We, like trees, need to be cut down, pruned, so that we may grow and experience new life.**

**Gospel**

**You know Who this Shoot is don’t you? These words from Isaiah are speaking of the future growth that came out of the tribe of Judah to save the world and -us. He is the personification of a healthy tree, one whom the Spirit of God has come upon, and has bestowed the seven gifts of the Spirit. He is Christ, the Messiah, who is wise and understanding, strong and knowledgeable, who shall one day, on “That Day” judge the world.**

**And He shall possess the fear of the Lord. No, not that kind of fear, even though because of our sin we should fear Him in that way for He is Holy, and we are not. But, this kind of fear is the kind that will make you say, “Oh Shoot! I have never seen Him in this way! It is the kind of understanding that leaves us in *awe*. The kind of understanding that if Jesus stood in the yard and by a mere point of a finger out every one of those Bradford Pears back into their four-year-old kind of condition, that kind of awe! Now THAT would be the time to use the term, “AWESOME”, for that is the kind of God we have! And when we understand *that* kind of fear, we have a glimpse into how we should revere and love our God.**

**And why should we love Him? Because even way back then, Isaiah predicted that God would send this Messiah, Jesus, in the flesh to come and be cut down for us. Yes. That is the only way that we could be saved. All of us weak trees, who are tossed by the wind, rain, snow and all other kinds of calamities, needed to be saved by this “shoot”. And He came and was cut down. I’ve often wondered what a tree felt like when it was damaged and had to be cut down. Those saw teeth ripping and tearing into it, chewing the bark off and then slicing the woody flesh into tiny pieces. And I can’t imagine a *perfect tree*, being cut down for me.**

**But Jesus was! And then, like a shoot from a stump, He came to life three days later, and rose from the grave, the first fruits of those who believe in Him! Oh, what a mighty “Blessed Shoot” God has sent! For He is the tree of Life! And we are here to drink Him in. Just like that root I showed the kids. We, who hunger and thirst for His righteousness are here, His chosen ones, His branches, His fruits.**

**But that’s not all Isaiah wrote about! No, he wrote of another day, a day of reckoning, a day of judgement, and a day of peace.**

**Application**

**Have you ever been around where trees are being cut down in a woods or forest? Do you recall the smell? Or when the wood is stacked by the cabin, carried in, to place in the fire and you- just breath it in? It is a sweet aroma. It is what the Lord wants from us; an understanding of Him that causes us to revere and worship Him, so He can just stand there and breathe it all in! But woe to those who are not His when He comes and do not believe. For He wears a belt of justice and a sash of faithfulness. It has been the plan of God and His promise that justice will come on all the earth, and it will, by fire, but after this, peace for those who are His. It is a peace we don’t understand now, for where in this worldly nightmare today, do we find lions and tigers and bears and lambs and leopards and cows all resting together? We don’t. But one day, in “that day” which Isaiah predicts on more than one occasion, even the child will play with snakes! Now that’s peace! Wouldn’t that be a great Christmas? Are we not here because we are expectant of His coming, just like they were in the days of Isaiah?**

**This root of Jesse, this “Blessed Shoot” that has come to Bethlehem and will come again to us who love Him, this Jesus, whom the Gentiles seek and find at the Temple that 8th day of His life. And on “that day”, on His holy mountain, where all creation will be made new by He who made the creation in the first place. May you all grow, grow close to the Shoot of Jesse, for He has come once for you and will come again. Let us be prepared, ( I can’t stress this any more strongly) so that we may not be caught unawares and say, “Oh Shoot!”, but instead, rejoice saying, “Oh, Blessed Shoot!” And we, like Simeon repeat, “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your Word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all your People.”**

**In Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen!**