

Anything Budding in Your Life?

We have had one of the strangest winters in Kelowna. It seemed to just hang on. Yet, we know that spring is coming and the dormant fruit trees around us will come to life. Buds on their branches will open and leaves and blossoms will form. The blossoms will pave the way for the growth of fruit. Chapter 17 of the Old Testament Book of Numbers speaks of a miracle involving new life on dead wood.

Numbers 16 gives an account of a rebellion in the Israelite camp during their time of their wandering in the desert. God had declared the tribe of Levi (one of the 12 tribes of Israel) to be a tribe devoted totally to God's service. The Levites looked after the Tabernacle (God's dwelling that took the form of a tent) while they wandered in the desert and later the Temple built in Jerusalem. God ordained Moses' brother Aaron, and his sons after him, to be the priestly class that would serve God in the Tabernacle and later the Temple.

A group of 250 men opposed Moses and Aaron. They believed they were every bit as good as Aaron and his sons and should also be allowed to be priests serving in God's Tabernacle. God quelled the rebellion. With the rebellion stopped, God gave all the people a sign that Aaron and his descendants formed the legitimate priesthood. God instructed Moses to obtain a rod (a wooden staff) from the leader of each of the 12 tribes. As Moses received a rod from a tribal leader, Moses was to write the name of the tribe from which it came on the rod. God decreed that Aaron's name be on the rod that came from the Tribe of Levi. God told Moses to put the 12 rods in the Tabernacle and keep them there overnight. God declared that the rod that budded by the next day would be declared the priestly tribe.

The Scriptures declare: "The next day Moses entered the tent and saw that Aaron's rod, which represented the tribe of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds." (Numbers 17:8) God had declared Aaron the true priest of Israel by miraculously giving new life and fruit to a dead stick.

The New Testament Letter to the Hebrews declares: "Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house." (Hebrews 3:1-2). These verses declare that God the Father appointed Jesus Christ as our High Priest. Jesus' appointment as the ultimate High Priest was not going to be settled by bringing new life and fruit to a dead stick; rather, by bringing new life to a dead High Priest. All High Priests that came before Jesus were like the 11 rods that Moses put into the tent. One after another they went to the grave and stayed there.

On Friday April 14th, we will remember that on the first Good Friday, Jesus suffered, died and became as lifeless as the tribal rods Moses had collected so long ago. His lifeless body was put in a tomb, the same way that Moses placed the rods in the darkness of the Tabernacle. On Sunday April 16th we will celebrate that, like Aaron's staff, Jesus miraculously came back to life. The crop of almonds produced by Aaron's rod, pointed forward and declared that the ultimate High Priest would possess the power to pass this new life on to others.

Some 2,000 years ago Jesus comforted a woman named Martha, awash with grief at the death of her brother Lazarus. She had asked Jesus to come and heal Lazarus' illness, but he tarried and

Lazarus died. Jesus assured Martha that Lazarus would rise from the dead. He declared, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world." (John 11:25-27). Jesus declared that life after death came from faith in him; faith in his identity as the only begotten Son of God. Jesus' words had planted a seed of hope and faith in Martha. Jesus made this seed take root for Martha, her sister Mary and a multitude of mourners when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus planted seeds of faith in his disciples when he appeared to them on the first Easter Sunday and proved he was the Son of God who suffered died for our sins and rose again. By faith in Jesus' identity, death and resurrection, we can have eternity today. Because Jesus lives, and we believe in him, we are just like Aaron's rod. When our lifeless bodies, dead sticks, are placed in the dark tomb, we are assured that we will live, we will bud, leaf-out and bear fruit forever.

Come join us for worship on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Let the Gospel seed fall on you and make faith bud, flower and bear fruit within you and transform you in ways you can't even imagine.

In Christ,

Pastor Ed Skutshek