

**Stop for a moment. Really stop. Take a breath, one that isn't rushed. What's filling your life right now? Noise, deadlines, scrolling through your phone, that constant low hum of pressure... or something a little deeper? Maybe, underneath it all, there's a quiet tug, a sense that God is closer than we usually notice. Advent asks us to pay attention to that tug, to make a little space in lives that are already too full.**

**Isaiah gives us a stubborn image: a stump. Not a tree pruned for winter, not a branch that can grow again, but a stump. Finished. Done. And yet... life finds a way. A small green shoot pushes through. Fragile, easy to miss—but unstoppable. That shoot is the Messiah. He comes with the Spirit of God, defending the vulnerable, judging with wisdom, restoring peace so deep even creation feels it. Isaiah imagines a world transformed: wolves and lambs resting side by side. It sounds strange, maybe impossible. But it's a promise. The kingdom is breaking in. Quietly. Steadily. Even now.**

**Paul and the psalmist echo that vision: a king who lifts up the poor, who gathers people who wouldn't usually come together. And then there's John the Baptist: dusty, bold, urgent. "Repent! The kingdom is near!" He's not shaming anyone; he's waking us up. Clearing the path. Making space for mercy to breathe in us.**

**Think of a workplace you know, maybe your own. Tension hangs in the air. People protect their turf. Little frustrations pile up. And then, someone does something different. They listen. They step in to help. They refuse easy gossip. Nothing dramatic. But the air shifts. People breathe a little easier. Gratitude shows up where no one expected it. That's the kingdom: quiet seeds changing a field one small act at a time.**

**We still live in wilderness: division, distraction, the parts of our hearts we'd rather not look at. Advent doesn't tell us to sit and wait for light to appear. It calls us to walk toward it. Straighten what's twisted. Soften what's hardened. Offer mercy where we've held it back. Notice where God is already moving, and step into that current.**

**Because the stump is never the last word. Not with God. New life finds cracks to grow through—families, neighborhoods, the pieces of ourselves we thought were beyond repair. The Messiah is coming. And every act of justice, every quiet mercy, every step toward love: they're not small. They're paths. They're clearing the road.**

**So, this week, look for the shoot. It's there. Let it change how you walk. Let hope take root. And let God grow something in you that surprises you, something you didn't think was possible.**