



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + May 16, 2021 AD + **Easter Season***

This Week: The Tree of Life

We see something of God in Johnny Appleseed.

You know the story of Johnny Appleseed, yes? He was John Chapman, who planted nurseries across mid-eastern states, including apple trees. Although in real life Chapman was a nurseryman and businessman, people remember him as bringing trees everywhere he went, and in that image we catch a glimpse of our own Lord.

God included trees throughout His sacred history, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden to the burning bush of Moses to Elijah's juniper tree and all the fig trees of Israel, as well as the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus and of course, the tree of life—the forest of life!—growing on either side of the river in the City of God (Revelation 22:2).

By planting so many trees in our hearts, God roots us in the Tree that saved the world: the Tree of the cross on which our Savior died. That Tree is the true Tree of Life, whose pressed and pierced fruit brought forth the wine of heaven, our Lord's holy blood. That eternal, overflowing cup provides a feast that feeds both body and soul with resurrection and immortality. We therefore come to the cross, as we will come to the eternal Tree of Life in that City, as a nurseryman might come to a beloved apple tree: with devotion, thanksgiving, and love.

About the Cover Art

New York native Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933), of the famed Tiffany stained glass company, designed the "Tree of Life" seen on this week's cover. Although fancifully outfitting the City of God with mountains not described in Revelation, the window nevertheless depicts a fruitful tree by a river, recalling Revelation's promise that the Tree of Life bears fruit in ever month on either city of the crystal stream. Its golden and purple fruit hint at an otherworldly luster, and the vine wrapping around it recall the Tree's spreading growth throughout the City.

The Fruit of the Tree: Devotion on Receiving the Blood of Christ

Christ promises that all who drink the cup of His Supper will receive His own precious blood: “The cup that we bless: is it not a communion in the blood of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16) How shall you pray and set your heart as you receive this great gift?

Consider, first, how the people of Scripture approached Christ: they rushed to Him (Mark 9:15), they bowed before Him (Matt. 9:18), they clasped His feet (Matthew 28:9), and adored Him (Luke 7:38). In the Body and Blood of Communion, the very same One comes to you in the flesh! Why not rush, bow, and take hold of Him with adoration? Before taking the cup, you might pray Psalm 116:12-13: “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me? I will take the cup of salvation and call on the Name of the Lord.” Afterwards you might spend time thanking Him and asking that His Blood and Body so work in you as to preserve you in faith, hope, and love.

Daily Readings for the Week of May 23 (Pentecost Day)

S Isaiah 11:1-9
1 Corinthians 2:1-13
John 14:21-29

Th Isaiah 65:17-25
2 Timothy 3:1-17
Luke 12:13-31

(Change volume in For All the Saints)

M Isaiah 63:7-14
2 Timothy 1:1-14
Luke 11:24-36

F Isaiah 66:1-6
2 Timothy 4:1-8
Luke 12:32-48

T Isaiah 63:15-64:9
2 Timothy 1:15-2:13
Luke 11:37-52

Sa Isaiah 66:7-14
2 Timothy 4:9-22
Luke 12:49-59

W Isaiah 65:1-12
2 Timothy 2:14-26
Luke 11:53-12:12

These readings correspond to pages 1199-1203 in Volume I and pages 3-37 in Volume II of For All the Saints.

Praying the Tree of Life

What kind of prayer might the Tree of Life, described in Revelation 22, lead you to pray? As always, we begin with the Word of God—He speaks first!—which give us words to offer God:

. . . On either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2).

To see the Tree: O Lord of Creation, who brought all things out of nothing and made them new in Jesus Christ: create in me a pure heart, and nourish it by Your grace, that I with all Your saints may see You in Your City and feast my eyes upon the verdant Tree of Life; through Jesus, Your Son, my Lord. Amen

Thanksgiving for the Tree: My Father, Maker of all things: on the Tree of the Cross blossomed the healing of the nations as Your Son bore away the sins of the world, and You have promised that this healing shall shade the nations in the world to come. All glory and honor to you, O loving Father, for this great salvation! Through Christ our Lord. Amen

To taste the fruit of the Tree: Holy and merciful God, You gladden the hearts of all who trust in You, setting for them a great and abundant feast. As You have nourished me with the bread and cup of salvation in Your Son's precious Body and Blood, so also bring me to eat and drink with Him in the City of Your own making; through the same Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen

Shepherd's Voice in the Summer

It's been a privilege and blessing to provide weekly content to encourage our home devotion this past year. From June through August, an abbreviated *Shepherd's Voice* will come to your home once a month with Scripture readings as a new round of material is planned and written for the fall.