



We have just barely finished Thanksgiving, and here we are, talking about trees and gifts and all the other things that remind us of Christmas time. When it comes to decorating, every family is different, but one tradition that seems pretty standard is having a Christmas tree somewhere in their home. This German tradition has been around for quite a while, and there is a story of our beloved Protestant reformer, Martin Luther bringing a tree into his home, and lighting it to remind him of the stars that twinkled in the night sky.

There isn't a mention of a Christmas tree in the Bible, but it does mention the olive tree quite a bit. Last week, I was reading in the book of Psalms, and came across a verse that I had underlined, but had never really thought about. It's from another Psalm of David, and it says, "But I am like an olive tree, thriving in the house of God. I will always trust in God's unfailing love," (Psalm 52:8.) So, I started thinking, what would make David like an olive tree? And why would anyone want to be like an olive tree? What's up with olive trees?

Did you know that olive trees are evergreens? Just like our Christmas trees that we put in our houses, they keep their leaves all year. They look a lot different than our evergreens in North Carolina...they have leaves that are blue-green on top and silvery on the bottom. They thrive on steep, rocky slopes in desert climates, and don't grow very tall. They can survive because of their extensive root system. If you notice the picture above, the olive tree looks weather worn and hollow. It doesn't look like a very healthy tree, but there it stands, and has stood for a very long time.

An olive tree might not be the most beautiful tree, but it can produce fruit for hundreds of years! That's hard to believe, right? Did you know that the olive trees that are in the Garden of Gethsemane have been around since the time of Jesus? Trees that are 2,000 years old have some serious resilience. One garden article that I read states, "The olive tree is virtually indestructible. In fact, it seems to flourish best in a hostile environment. Of course it grows in fertile valleys, but a tree on a stony slope produces more oil—up to a half-ton a year. If a tree is cut, new shoots grow out of the wound. It will not give up."

David, through his many trials and mistakes, was consistent about one thing. He didn't give up. He kept pursuing God and trusting in God's faithfulness. If he was struck down by something, he put out a new root and kept growing. That sounds a lot like an olive tree to me. I want to be like that olive tree...I want to have a faith that takes me through dry seasons and produces good fruit despite harsh conditions. In order to do that, I must live in thanksgiving, and read God's word to remind me of who He is and what He has done for me. When I keep the cross before me, I can focus less on myself and more on God and grow...one root at a time.

I will praise you forever, O God, for what you have done. I will trust in your good name in the presence of your faithful people. Psalm 52:9

