



By now, you are learning a little bit more about me, and each week I am learning a little more about you. You know that I love adventures and am always on the hunt for something fun to do. After my devotion about olive trees last week, you have another clue about something that I enjoy. Any guesses? If you guessed that I love to learn, then you would be correct! I am always curious to learn more about God's world around me, and it was fun to follow God on a scavenger hunt to find out about olive trees.

On any good quest, one discovery leads to another, and you learn more than you set out find when you started. Olive trees bloom in the spring, and bear fruit throughout the fall. Most olives are harvested in October and November, so olive season is just ending. Today olives are harvested several different ways, but in the time of Jesus, the olives were either picked by hand, or the branches were beaten, and the olives collected on cloth spread below the trees.

Olives that were handpicked were often the ones that were eaten, but the ones that were harvested by beating the trees were the ones pressed into olive oil. The best came from the first pressing, but olives were often heated and pressed again to get every drop of oil possible. Today, olive oil is a staple in our kitchens. We use it for salad dressing, and cooking. The Israelites used it that way also - do you remember the story from 1 Kings 17:8-24, about Elijah and the widow? She had only a bit of flour and oil, and that was what she was going to use to prepare her meal. She would have also used a little oil to light a lamp so that they could see after the sun went down.

So, let's recap for a moment. Olive trees grow best under the harshest of conditions. If the climate is dry and barren, they will put out root after root to try to draw as much nutrition and water from the soil as possible. When the olives are ripe, sometimes the olives are handpicked, but often times the trees are beaten so that the fruit will fall to the ground. In order to get the olive oil, the olives are pressed, and in some cases, they are heated and pressed again.

For the Israelites, all this would have been done to secure oil that they really needed for food and light. The Israelites needed olive oil as much as we need Jesus today. Jesus suffered for us...he was beaten and hard pressed as a sacrifice for our sins. In John 6:35, Jesus says that he is the bread of life, and in John 8:12 he says that he is the light of the world. As we think about advent, and the coming birth of Jesus, we are reminded that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us because we needed him, just like the Israelites needed olive oil. From His death and resurrection, we have received grace upon grace, and can live in His light and love for eternity!

I am the true bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the world.

John 6:33

