

## TREES OF THE BIBLE

As I just talked with the children about the two trees, I believe our answers as adults would be much the same, but for different reasons. In the Psalm describing the “*truly happy*” person or as other translations say it, “*the blessed*” we are talking about far more than an outward appearance. We are talking about that inner faith and love that comes out in the very things the psalmist writes about in the first few verses.

**It is because we are firmly rooted in faith, know Christ, and God's grace that the description of the tree here in Psalm one is possible.** This sounds much like the words found in James the last several weeks.

**James encouraged us to not just be hearers of the word, but doers and that out of our faith comes works in the form of loving our neighbor as ourselves.** It this so hard to do? Not really, *because God's desire is for us to succeed! If we study the Bible we can discover what it takes to do these things.* Do we try to operate a device, a car, or a piece of machinery without reading the operating manual first? Well, I guess for some that answer is no. But all kidding aside how do we expect to live out our faith and love without studying the manual first? We can't just glean it from others, others can help us but it has to be us, you and me, that do it.

Another way it is not going to happen - just sitting in church every Sunday. It doesn't make us any more holy, or love people more. If your spouse or parent has to drag you here what exactly are you going to get out of it? If you come with folded arms, closed ears and mind, but more importantly a closed heart it will be difficult, but not impossible for God to speak to you. Now in no way am I encouraging you or excusing you to stay home. **What I am encouraging you to do is come to church expecting something!!! God will meet you whether it is through a song, a prayer, a scripture or maybe even the sermon!!!** After all it was John Wesley who went to a meeting and God met Him there and He was never the same. It happens otherwise how do you explain the events down through church history that changed people and changed the world.

Trees seem to have had a significant role all through the Bible. It is something I had not given much thought to until I began to look at Psalm one and the reference to a tree, then relating that healthy tree to our own spiritual health and actions of our faith.

Go all the way back to Genesis and into the Garden of Eden. It was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that Eve took the fruit from at the prompting of the serpent. Then in the third chapter of Genesis we find Adam and Eve hiding behind a Tree from God.

Another time trees played a role in fact a much larger role was when Noah built the Ark. Unlike the

First tree in the Garden, which brought about the expulsion from the garden these trees actually saved Noah and his family from the flood because Noah was righteous in the sight of God.

In Jeremiah 17:8 *“he is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”* The words sound very much the same as today's verse from Psalm One.

We recall in First Kings the story of Elijah hiding out after Jezebel threaten him with death. His joy had turned to despair and he sat under a juniper tree. He felt far from God even though he had just had God prove his greatness over the false Gods on Mt. Carmel. **God's desire was for Elijah to get up and do work for him. Isn't that the way it is with us in our walk with God?** We have a high, a mountain top experience, then not long after we find ourselves in the valley wondering where we are. **God is with us, never forget that in your walk no matter how far you “feel” he is away, the fact is he is not!!!!**

Jesus through His ministry told people things they could or could not do using trees as examples. He talked about how a fig tree cannot bear olives or if a tree does not bear to chop it down. I see this as **Jesus talking plainly to the people that is it up to us to “bear” the fruit in our life.** We are told how to do that, but again we all make choices, some good, some not so good, and we live with them!!!

An interesting story we can recall from Sunday School tells of a man using a tree, a man called Zacchaeus. It was his desire to see Jesus and he climbed that tree. As a result of climbing that tree Jesus saw him and called to him and said He wanted to go to his house. The outcome being that Zacchaeus repented. **Are we willing to come to Jesus when we calls for us? Do we make an effort to build our relationship with Jesus or is our efforts so numerous in other areas with nothing left over for Him? Do we make time or do we find that we are satisfied to waste our time?** It can be a simple as reading one verse of Scripture and thinking about it all day and applying it to your life. This is what this religion thing is all about – applying these biblical principles to lives and improving our relationship not only with Jesus but with those we know and those we come in contact with.

**Now the last tree, and for us as followers the most important, the tree which Jesus was crucified on. Just as that tree was the means by which sin came into the world, this tree carried the Savior of the world on it.** Jesus died was buried and rose from the dead, He is a Living Savior, but it is our decision whether we invite Him to be our Lord and Savior. As I have said before just sitting here doesn't do it. We are told to confess Him with our own mouth, from our own heart.

There are numerous times that trees are mentioned like Solomon using the cedars of Lebanon to build the temple, Ezekiel speaks of the tree that will bring forth a sprout like no other -which foretold of the Messiah that was to come.

**It is good to increase our knowledge of what is in the Bible, but doesn't it come down to the "how to"?** You can talk about all the connections to this and that, but again **how do we use it in real life?** The verses about the tree in this Psalm lays it out for us-- "*like a tree replanted by streams of water*" in this part of the verse the *Hebrew word means to be transplanted that is taken from one environment and planted in another.* Does that not describe our life, though some have been in church all our lives and do not know a life outside of it? However, for many there are times even if we have been in church all our life we drift and just like Elijah we feel God is far away. One of these times for me was during college even though I was older. What it amounted to was I just didn't take time for Him. I did not "*feed*" on the word, that "*stream of water*" that could have kept me as "*an oak of righteous*" a planting of the Lord as stated in Isaiah 61. Righteousness here means morally right behavior. You can't expect to stay warm if you are far from the source of the heat and you cannot stay "fed" if you are far from the source of water!

A second part of the verse talks about this tree "*bearing fruit at just the time*". I look at this to mean that when we should remain close to God. **Our relationship with Christ is where it should be for us that we will know when to speak and when not to speak, to help in someone's time of need.** After all Jesus knew exactly when to reach out and speak words not condemning but with compassion.

Next still referring to the tree "*whose leaves never fade*" I look at this to mean we will "**hold up**" **under any circumstances because our trust is in the Lord and He will give us the strength to go through any "season" we find ourselves in. We have to remember though that bearing fruit at just the right time may not be our time, but God's time.**

To end this verse the Psalmist says "*whatever they do succeeds.* When we remain close to God we will succeed but that will not be the success measured by our culture. These words remind of words of Jesus when He speaks of gaining the world but losing the soul. **If we follow God's words those things that last and are really important will be ours as children of God.**

**This Psalm lays out for us a few of those things which we should avoid, not because God wants to rule our lives, but in order that we may have real freedom from those things that will limit our freedom.**

There was once a farmer who went to town to purchase seeds for his farm. As he was returning home one of the squash seeds he had purchased fell from his pocket onto the ground. It happened that within a few feet was another seed of a different type. The place where the two seeds lay was rather fertile, and miraculously they took root.

After about a week the squash seed showed signs of growth. The second seed showed none. After two weeks the squash began to sprout leaves. The second seed showed none. After seven weeks the squash began to show fruit. The second seed still showed no progress. Four more weeks came and gone.

The squash plant reached the end of its life bearing much fruit in that time, but the other seed finally began to slowly grow. Many years later, the squash was all but forgotten, but the other tiny seed, an acorn, had grown into a mighty oak tree.

**So many people want their faith to be like the squash. They want to experience it all right now... Spiritual growth requires hard work and patience -- as anything worthwhile does.**

The truly happy person has both the leaves, (*the outward profession*) and the fruit, (*love for God and others as an inward reality*). They are consistent because their life is based on principle, not feelings or passing whims. Like a tree they are firmly rooted and established. **This is the tree of the Bible God desires us to be.**

Amen.