

AUDIO SCRIPT #4

Trees of the Field: Holding Community

"I love trees", someone wrote on my website when I posted an article I wrote called, "Like a Tree." Perhaps you have your own stories of trees that hold special significance for you.

The biblical landscape is scattered with trees.

In the unfolding of creation, God delighted in putting forth vegetation, fruit trees of every kind. This is abundance.

There were trees in the Garden of Eden, especially that one of good and evil. This recalls the practice of discernment.

Jonah pouted under some kind of tree. Trees shade many kinds of moods!

The new land was appraised for its majestic trees and for figs and pomegranates, the fruit of trees. Here is abundance.

Cedar trees were valued in the making of the Temple. Trees are part of the economy of life.

People were hung on trees (see Joshua 10.) Trees were cut down in war and aggression.

The trees of the field clapped their hands in homecoming, a metaphor of joy.

Wise ones are *like* trees planted by the water.

Peace is like sitting under your own Olive tree.

Trees are often very personal.

In a healing story, the healed one saw people who looked like trees walking. We are closely related to trees, sharing a reciprocal relationship.

Palm Sunday people waved branches of the Palm tree.

There is a Tree of Life on either side of the river with twelve kinds of fruit (Revelation.)

That's a lot of stories and there are more!

For me, trees are a metaphor of community. I imagine the ancients gathering among the groves of trees. And, I am always mindful of the natural kinship between tree and human as we complete each others living breath.

A while ago I took part in a Bible-less Bible study. I was told that it originated with a group of Christian Peacemakers who were imprisoned together. They didn't have a Bible but each day they would do Bible study by recalling from memory some stories and then deciding on one. Together they would tell the story from memory. They worked on three questions.

What is the main point of this story for me?

What is difficult, challenging or confusing about this story?

How might this story change my life?

I love this practice. It helps shake us free of words. It reminds us that the Bible is full of stories that were told by memory and shared around campfire circles. It also reminds us these stories are for us. We can listen to a story and find meaning in ourselves. All we need to do is bring our longing and we meet God. The stories, images and metaphors have power to shape, and inform our life today.

Sometimes I do Bible-less Bible Study by myself. I let a story rise in me, recall as much as I can of the story and ask myself the questions. You might want to journal your responses.

Trees are a profound symbol of ancient wisdom and sanctuary, hospitality and community. So today, I invite you to share study and prayer in community.

And I leave you with one of my favourite tree verses. From Psalm 1

*"But the blessed ones grow strong as living trees,
their roots sink deep and hidden beside the flowing
streams which come from you."*

- Psalm 1:3a, Ancient Songs Sung Anew (Bauman)

May you know the blessing of living trees in your circle today.