

What Kind of Tree Are You?

Devotional by Dotty Lessley, PWP Historian

When I was asked to do this devotional I immediately knew what I was going to share. Just look out these windows and you can see the true majesty of God's creation. I knew that I was going to share my favorite passage of scripture, Psalm 1. Reading from *Psalms/Now*:

The man who chooses to live a significant life is not going to take his cue from the religiously indifferent. Nor will he conform to the crowd nor mouth his prejudices nor dote on the failures of others. His ultimate concern is the will of God. He makes his daily decisions in respect to such. He can be compared to a sturdy tree planted in rich and moist soil. As the tree yields fruit, so his life manifests blessing for others. His life is productive and effective. This is not true concerning the ungodly. They are like sand in a desert storm or leaves in an autumn wind. They cannot stand against the judgements of the eternal God. And they are most uncomfortable among those who demonstrate genuine faith in the God of righteousness. The children of God walk in the course that God had ordained. The children of unbelief walk in paths of self-destruction.

Growing up, I anxiously awaited the airing of *The Wizard of Oz* each year. This was when we just had the three major networks before VCRs. I always likened Dorothy to the Godly Tree. She knew what it meant to be a true friend, a loving family member, and how to live as a servant to others. Dorothy understood that there was no place like home. Not just our earthly home, but also our heavenly home. Then, of course, you have the Wicked Witch. She was the Ungodly Tree. She was selfish, self-centered, controlling, and self-righteous. She didn't have a clue! It was her own greed and jealousy that destroyed her. She literally withered or rather melted away.

When I was sixteen, my father passed away on May 11th. Mother was a teacher. We knew that we would have only a few months to find a new home and move from the manse when Southwood found a new pastor. So, it was decided that we would move that summer. In fact, the day we relocated to Sylacauga was the day I was to have taken my senior portrait for Talladega High. Needless to say, I didn't have a senior portrait.

In the midst of unpacking, I ran across a little book titled *Hilltop Verses and Prayers* by Ralph Spaulding Cushman. It has been in my possession since that day. I discovered what has become my favorite poem.



I Love A Tree

*I love a tree,
A brave upstanding tree!
When I am wearied in the strife,
Beaten by storms and bruised by life,
I look up at a tree, and it refreshes me.
If it can keep its head held high,
And look the storms straight in the eye,
Ready to stand, ready to die,
Then by the grace of God can I –
At least with Heaven's help, I'll try;
I love a tree, for it refreshes me!*

*I love a tree!
When it seems dead,
Its leaves all shorn and bared its head,
When winter flings its cold and snow,
It stands there undismayed by woe;
It stands there waiting for the spring –
A tree is such a believing thing.
I love a tree, for it refreshes me!*

As I light this Christ candle, I want you to reflect on all of the wonderful things trees provide: shade, shelter for birds and squirrels, fruit, nuts, sap for syrup, paper, wood for furniture, framing for our homes, fuel for our fireplaces, rubber, spices, medicines, and the list goes on. Then ask yourself this question: What kind of tree am I? Are you a Dorothy Tree; a servant tree providing shade, shelter, support, and strength for others in need? Or, are you a Wicked Witch Tree that is selfish, self-centered, self-righteous, and self-destructive; thinking only of yourself? What kind of tree are you?

Let us pray. And he shall be like a tree, a brave, upstanding tree! Dear God, Thy servant said it centuries ago; that his leaf shall not wither, that whatsoever he doeth shall prosper – provided he walk not in the council of the ungodly, but keep his delight in the law of the Lord. Oh, that I would be that person; grant me Thy grace, dear God. Amen.