

Hug A Tree

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Liturgical Year A

Seeds of Faith

May 21, 2023

“The Giving Tree”

Having read the four suggested scriptures twice I am left empty. Sometimes the Bible and I just don't match up. My head is in a different place than the biblical texts suggests, and I will not force my thinking on the texts. Somehow writing about restoring the Kingdom, eternal life glorifying me, and humbling myself is somewhere out in twilight zone.

My thought lies in recent articles in two county papers: The Observer and the Crawford Scout. Both papers had interesting articles about trees. One article had to do with “the passing of one of Richland Center's oldest residents at 190 years of age”. It was a picture of a stump, a large Bur Oak at the corner of Main Street and Fourth. The tree had its time, even a sidewalk was built around it.

Another was a picture of a male Pileated Woodpecker working in a cavity of an Aspen Tree. The bird was pecking out a nest cavity which can take up to 30 days to complete.

The third story of which there were many was a picture of a woman with a baby on her back hugging a tree they call “the family tree.” They have many trees in their woods that sport name tags honoring families and individuals. I love the name of her child, Sylvan, meaning “living or located in the woods, or grove.”

Growing up one of my favorite trees in the yard was an apple tree. I literally grew up with the tree. As the tree grew, I would sit under its shade on hot days. The larger the tree grew I would climb it and eat its

fruit. Whenever one of my painted turtles or tropical fish would die, I would bury them under the apple tree.

I pulled from my shelves one of my favorite theological books, “The Giving Tree” by Shel Silverstein. If you haven’t read the book, I invite you to do so. It is a tender story, touched with sadness, aglow with consolation. It is a child’s story about a boy taking things from the tree and the tree is willing to give it all. The story ends with the boy being an old man and all that is left of the tree is the stump and they are both happy. I literally cried throughout the book.

Martin Luther King Jr was asked what he would do if the world were coming to an end. Martin responded, “I would plant a tree.” Trees as we all know provide shade, fruit, nesting places for birds, hideouts for insects, purify the air, reduce summer electric bills, reduce noise from the highway, provide a privacy screen, slow down wind erosion, inspire poets and much more.

If what I just said referring to trees is true, why am I in tears when I drive around the area I live?

Hundreds of logs are shipped in to build log cabins,

Yet the builders plant no trees.

Hundreds of logs are shipped in to cut up for wooden pallets,

Yet the builders plant no trees.

Hundreds of logs are shipped in to fuel many homes,

Yet the homeowners plant no trees.

Around every turn in the road there is a cabinet maker,

Yet the cabinet maker plants no trees.

This is not a knock-on log cabin builders, nor cabinet makers but it is a knock on how we keep taking but give so little back.

Good old Brueggemann talks about “trees being a sign of hope.” The Bible from beginning to end is about being good stewards, taking Care of creation, being good neighbors, planting what we reap. You want scripture read Genesis 1:11-13, Deuteronomy 20:19-20, Isaiah 44:23, Job 14:7-7, Psalm 96:11-13, 148:7-12, Ezekiel 17:24, Jeremiah 10:3-5 and on and on.

In case laziness has set in, here is Isaiah 55:12

“ For you shall go out with joy.

And be led out with peace;

The mountains and the hills

shall bring forth into singing before you.

And all the trees of the field

shall clap their hands.”

The reckless attitude many have towards our environment means we will soon have no trees to hug. Consumerism and materialism are taking over our lives.

Around my cabin alone I have planted more than sixty trees and bushes. The pine tree below I planted in 1998.

In case you missed my main point, TREES HAVE A MAJOR ROLE IN THE WELL BEING OF CREATION.

Hug a tree,

Dennis Siebert



Planted this pine tree in 1998

We in the Driftless area are blessed with White and Red Oak, Shagbark Hickory, Red and Sugar Maple, Basswood, Black Cherry and the American Elm. 46% of the land in Wisconsin is forested. In acres that is 16 million .

Leopold 1887-1948 said we all have a moral responsibility about people, the land, and to make sure that land and people are in relationship with one another.