

May 1, 2016     Sixth Sunday of Easter

Genesis 2: 5-9. Revelation 21: 10, 11; 22: 1, 2. Two Trees

I love trees! I have my tree books, my North American and Canadian Field Guides. I know the various leaves, needles and cones. But, I also know the different shapes and sizes of trees, and the differing barks so I can identify them in the winter months. For years Vicki and I have had a membership at the Morgan Arboretum. We even bought our house because of the amazing tree in the backyard.

***My favourite tree is the White Pine. What is your favourite tree?***

I worry about the various diseases and pests attacking our trees now-a-days: those unwelcome visitor's from abroad, like the Emerald Ash Borer, here already on the Island of Montreal. And then there are the home grown infestations arising from climate change, like the Western Pine Beetle. As I travel around I'm always looking out for groups of dead or dying species. It even keeps me up at night.

I'm a serious tree guy, and while you might expect me to be a bit of a tree hugger I must confess that I have had a chainsaw since I was fourteen. In fact when a storm blows through, friends give me a call to come and cut down or cut up damaged trees. I just love felling and limbing trees. I love cutting, chopping, stacking and burning fire wood. It is something I've done most of my life. So my love for trees is complicated.

You know the Bible begins and ends with trees. The Bible begins with reference to two trees at the centre of the Garden of Eden, the ***Tree-of-the-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil***, and the ***Tree-of-Life***. One tree leads to suffering, struggle, division on the one hand and discernment and responsible choice, on the other. The second tree grants access to eternal patterns, everlasting possibilities: The unity in all things. This too is complicated.

As the story goes, because we ate first, from the ***Tree-of-the-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil***, we were restrained from eating from the ***Tree-of-Life***.

Collectively and individually we humans have to work through the tensions of discerning right from wrong. We have to struggle with ***Good and Evil*** to learn what

leads to life and what does not. Over time this process evolved into the trials and tribulations of following rules and regulations on the one hand and empathy and intimacy on the other. All of this reflects the implications and responsibilities of coming to conscious awareness. Coming to consciousness is the necessary process before we can sample the other tree, the unity and everlasting life available to us.

At a biological level the tree whose fruit we ate reflects the struggle between left and right brain processing, between reason and values, between things and relationships: The trials and tribulations that arise between applying the letter of the law or the spirit of the law. The other tree, the *Tree of Life* represents the whole brain experience of participating in **God's** endless grace: The renewing unity in all life.

Now remember the Bible also ends with trees. The bible ends with the New Jerusalem coming to earth from heaven, but now with only one kind of tree growing at the centre, the **Tree of Life**, *“producing twelve kinds of fruit, a ripe fruit every month, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.”*

Something has evolved here. Something has been overcome and it has everything to do with **Jesus**. He gets out of the all too human box and deals decisively with the *Tree-of-the-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil*. He internalizes it and resolves the conflict within himself. He takes on, takes into his own experience all the good and the evil before him. Even on the cross he doesn't fight these as opposites, but works through them as polarities, paying whatever price, or offering whatever is needed, in order to resolve things. His innocent suffering reveals the truth about our double mindedness and challenges us to seek the unity in all things. In other words **Jesus** comes to full consciousness and transcends the *either or* world that sent him to the cross in the first place. Through his hard won consciousness he can partake of the *Tree of Life*. *We call this resurrection living.*

We see the pattern unfolding early in his ministry. When the people of a village brought their sick, or infirmed, or deranged or simply overwhelmed family members to **Jesus**, he didn't analyze their faults or wonder if they were worthy of his time or apply

some sort of sin meter. No, He recognized only their needs. He drew them into his healing kindness. He restored them to themselves and returned them to the kindness of their loved ones and community.

When we allow the **Jesus Way** to work within us the tensions and struggles of living with the *Tree-of-the-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil* no longer dominate our life. The struggle of dualisms, of double-mindedness begins to ease as we embrace the mystical, the New Jerusalem, the Tree of Life, in the here and now.

We let go of the struggles of information overload to come to *wisdom*.

We let go of the heartless demands of the law to come to the opportunity to *love*.

We let go of the struggles of being right to come to just *being helpful*.

We let go of the resistance in withholding, to come to the freedom of *allowing*.

We let go of the either/or approach, to come to the *both/and response*.

We let go of the habit of judging to come to the opportunity of *forgiving*.

We learn to let go of dualistic thinking to embrace the messiness of *paradox*.

In other words, with **Jesus** we recognize that the deep and profound needs before us are not an error or a failing or a short coming, but rather a new priority, a necessary focus for our lives.

With **Jesus** we ease up on judgments and comparisons, and offer compassion instead.

With **Jesus** we embrace the needs of others and simply offer kindness in whatever form is needed.

The **Jesus Way**, transcends the trials and tribulations we have with the *Tree-of-the-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil*, and integrates it into the *Tree-of-Life*, which now bears twelve kinds of fruit, a ripe fruit for every month, *for every need*, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, still eating from that other tree. The **Jesus Way** is abundant living, sharing from the *Tree of Life*.

### **The Application for Today**

With **Jesus** we relax. We move from what's right to what helps.

We simply embrace the needs and offer healing kindness. I really like trees, don't you?

## Meditative Prayer

Follow your breathing inward to that prayerful place.

Rest in the light and love of God's presence.

Let go of any struggles or tension in your mind or body.

Rest in the light and love of God's presence.

Let go of the struggles of information overload to come to *wisdom*.

Let go of the heartless demands of the law to come to the opportunity to *love*.

Let go of the struggles of being right to come to just *being helpful*.

Let go of the resistance in withholding, to come to the freedom of *allowing*.

Let go of the either/or approach, to come to the *both/and response*.

Let go of the habit of judging to come to the opportunity of *forgiving*.

Let go of dualistic thinking to embrace the messiness of *paradox*.

O God hear our prayer... **And in your love answer**

Now with **Jesus** recognize that the deep and profound needs  
of friends, family or coworkers,

are not an error or a failing or a short coming,

but rather a new priority, a necessary focus for your life.

O God hear our prayer... **And in your love answer**

With **Jesus** ease up on judgments and comparisons,  
and offer compassion instead.

O God hear our prayer... **And in your love answer**

With **Jesus** embrace the needs of others and simply offer kindness  
in whatever form is needed.

O God hear our prayer... **And in your love answer**

And now let us pray as Jesus taught us saying...