

IF I WERE A TREE

(Ezekiel 17: 22-24)

Intro: If I were a tree.
-What kind of tree would I be?

That sounds like the title for a children's story book.
-If you want to write it.
#Remember to give 10% of your royalties to Ascension.

I. There Are So Many Different Kinds Of Trees.

A. What Kind Of Tree Might You Be?

1. Some trees are good for their wood.
 - a. Strong.
 - b. Straight.
 - Buildings.
 - Boats.
 - Furniture.
2. Some trees are good for their fruit.
 - a. Apples.
 - b. Apricots.
 - c. Oranges.
 - d. Peaches.
 - Tasty.
 - Nourishing.
3. Some trees are good for their shelter.
 - a. Place for animals to build their nests.
 - Squirrels.
 - Birds.
 - b. Often out of the reach of:
 - Adults.
 - Children.
 - c. Momma robin built her nest in one of our trinity pears this spring.
 - Close enough to the ground for me to see.
 - But out of the reach of granddaughter Lorelei.
 - Momma robin was none too happy.
 - #If we dared to get too close.

4. Some trees are good for their shade.
 - a. Even if they're not known for their:
 - Wood.
 - Fruit.
 - Shelter.
 - b. They can at least get in the way of the sun.
 - Cast their shadow where it might do us some good.
5. What kind of tree might you be?

B. Trees Don't Choose What Kind Of Tree They Will Be.

1. Harold Wicks planted twelve new trees for us this spring.
 - a. Six Cleveland pears.
 - b. Six red maples.
 - I don't think Harold had much choice.
 - #When he went to get the trees from the Apache Foundation.
 - #They were what they were.
 - #He got what he got.
 - Those trees didn't choose what they would be.
 - #Cleveland pears didn't say:
 - *"I want to be a Cleveland pear."
 - *"I want to be pretty in the spring."
 - #Red maples didn't say:
 - *"I want to be a red maple."
 - *"I want to be pretty in the fall."
 - Nor can those trees choose to be something else.
 - #Cleveland pear can't say:
 - *"I want to be red maple."
 - *"I want to be a redbud."
 - #Red maple can't say:
 - *"I want to be a Cleveland pear."
 - *"I want to be a palm tree."
 - Nor can Harold change them.
 - #Harold has many talents.
 - #But I don't think that's one of them.
 - *He can't change:
 - +Pear tree into a redbud.
 - +Maple tree into a dogwood.
2. If you were a tree, would it be ok just to be.
 - a. To be the tree you were created to be.
 - Known for your:
 - #Wood.
 - #Fruit.
 - #Shelter.
 - #Shade.

- Or would you hope to be remade?
 - #Different person.
 - *Different tree.
 - #With different gifts.
 - *For all to see.
- b. To allow others to be the tree they were created to be.
 - Known for their:
 - #Gifts.
 - #Talents.
 - #Ideas.
 - #Views.
 - Or would you hope they'd be more like you?
 - #Similar thoughts.
 - *Similar trees.
 - #Why can't every tree,
 - *Be more like me?
- 3. There are so many different kinds of trees.
 - a. They cannot change themselves.
 - b. We cannot change them.
 - c. But God can.

II. Judah Was A Cedar.

A. Image That The Prophet Ezekiel Had.

- 1. Ezekiel
 - a. Priest.
 - b. 6th century B.C.
 - c. Recorder of visions.
 - Visions that came from God.
- 2. Our Old Testament Reading from two weeks ago.
 - a. Ezekiel 37.
 - b. Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones.
 - Vision of:
 - #Death.
 - #Resurrection.
 - *"Can these bones live?"
 - +Ezekiel 37:3.
- 3. Today's vision.
 - a. Not of bones.
 - b. But of trees.
 - If we read the whole chapter.
 - #Vision of:
 - *Trees.
 - *Birds.

- c. There was an eagle.
 - Plucked off the top of a cedar.
 - Transplanted it in a distant city.
 - Planted a seedling.
 - #Which began to grow toward the eagle.
- d. There was another eagle.
 - Seedling began to twist and grow toward the second eagle.
 - When the first eagle:
 - #Swooped in.
 - #Pulled it up by its roots.
- e. Fortunately for us, Ezekiel explained his vision.
 - Ezekiel 17: 11-21.
 - #Cedar.
 - *Judah.
 - #First eagle.
 - *Nebuchanezzar.
 - *King of Babylon.
 - #Top of the cedar.
 - *Judah's king.
 - *Jehoiachin.
 - #New seedling.
 - *Jehoiachin's successor.
 - *Zedekiah.
 - #Second eagle.
 - *Egypt.
 - Here's what happened.
 - #Nebuchanezzar took:
 - *King of Judah.
 - +Jehoiachin.
 - *Many of the leading citizens of Judah.
 - +Into exile.
 - +In Babylon.
 - #Nebuchanezzar then installed a puppet king.
 - *Zedekiah.
 - +Who was supposed to be loyal to Babylon.
 - +He was for awhile.
 - #But then Zedekiah turned to Egypt.
 - *Appealing for help against the Babylonians.
 - #That's when Nebuchadnezzar.
 - *Swooped in again.
 - *Pulled up the roots.
 - +Destroyed the Temple.
 - +Took even more people into exile.

- f. That's where our lesson for today comes into play.
 - God:
 - #Will take a sprig from the cedar.
 - #Will plant it on the mountain height of Israel.
 - This is a word of hope and promise.
 - #People of Israel.
 - *Should stop looking to:
 - +Their political leaders.
 - +Their military alliances with foreign powers.
 - *For their:
 - +Protection.
 - +Deliverance.
 - #God is the one:
 - *Who will deliver them from exile.
 - *Who will reestablish them in Jerusalem.
 - *Who will enable them to rebuild the Temple.
 - +On the Temple Mount.
 - #God is the one:
 - *Who can make little trees grow tall.
 - *Who can bring the tall trees down.

B. Here Is A Lesson For Us Trees.

- 1. We don't belong to ourselves.
 - a. Harold Wicks was telling me.
 - He had shared with an acquaintance.
 - #Harold had planted a dozen trees here at church.
 - His acquaintance said to Harold:
 - #"If you plant them,"
 - #"They're your trees."
 - *Meaning: "You're going to have to take care of them."
 - b. We are God's trees.
 - We belong to God.
 - God is the one who takes care of us.
 - #Planting us.
 - #Watering us.
 - *In Holy Baptism.
 - #Fertilizing and feeding us.
 - *Bread.
 - *Wine.
 - +In the Holy Supper.
 - God is the one:
 - #Who makes little trees grow.
 - #Who enables us to bear fruit.
 - #Who will gather the harvest at God's appointed time.

2. Trees make a mess.
 - a. In St. Louis.
 - Sweet gum balls.
 - #In the yard.
 - Maple seed whirlybirds.
 - #In the mesh of my gutter guard.
 - Honey locust leaves.
 - #In my air conditioner.
 - b. In Tulsa.
 - Cottonwood.
 - #In the church yard.
 - #So thick.
 - *It looks like:
 - +Snow.
 - +Cotton.
 - =On the ground.
 - *It feels like cotton.
 - +In my throat.
 - *You know it can't be good for the air conditioners.
 - Pecan fuzz.
 - #At our house.
 - #Couple of weeks ago.
 - *I climbed up on the roof.
 - *I swept all of that mess.
 - +Out of the valleys.
 - +Off of the gutters.
 - *Before it made even more of a mess.
 - +Clogging our gutters.
 - +Staining our driveway.
 - c. That's what our sin does.
 - It makes a mess.
 - It leaves a stain.
 - #Not just in the spring.
 - #Not just in the fall.
 - #But in all seasons.
3. Is there any tree that doesn't leave a mess?
 - a. There was one.
 - Actually more like a cross.
 - Than a tree.
 - b. Here is a word of:
 - Hope.
 - Promise.

- c. It looked terribly messy.
 - On Good Friday.
 - Blood stained.
 - Human flesh nailed to the wood.
 - #Jesus' blood.
 - #Jesus' flesh.
- d. It's that mess that cleans up our mess.
 - Washes us.
 - Cleanses us.
 - Forgives us.
- e. So that we might be the trees God created us to be.
 - God using us:
 - #To build up the kingdom.
 - #To bear spiritual fruit.
 - #To provide shelter.
 - *For all who would grow in the faith.
 - #To provide shade.
 - *For all who need relief from the heat.

Concl: If you were a tree.
-What kind of tree would you be?

