

HOPE GIVERS: PT 2. PLANTED BY GOD

I want to talk about oak trees this morning. Did you know that an oak tree can live 1000s of years and grow up to 27 metre round? 8.5 meter diameter.

Oaks are considered a symbol of strength, resistance, and of knowledge. In the Bible, they are linked to righteousness. I.e. God putting things right. There is a linguistic link between oak and God. El is the root for God and strength. Oaks are worshipped in some ancient cultures.

There are 800 different species. They are used for all kinds of things; shelter for stock, the bark is boiled for medicine. stock can eat the acorns, (150,000 on one tree!) In addition, it is great timber used furniture, ships, and beams. It is highly water resistant, does not shrink, is durable, and looks nice. Wars in the past have been fought to secure the supply of oak.

Throughout history oak trees have been meeting places and landmarks. Let's meet at a certain oak tree. They are given names. (lots of historical examples) When Abraham chose to believe God when he promised to make him into a great nation, Abraham left his homeland and went to Canaan. As he arrived there, there was a great oak tree, and it was there that Abram built an altar to the Lord. It has been called Abraham Oak or the Shechem Oak. Gen 12:6-7

Why am I going on about oak trees? Last week we began a series called Hope Givers. Series based on Isaiah 61. Check out last week's notes for context and a great website to help understand the book. Isaiah is a book of judgement and hope. In the second section there are three chapters 60, 61, 62 poems that are kingdom poems. They are describing something new that was going to happen in the future. The fulfilment has begun with Jesus Christ, and the kingdom that he is bringing in.

This Scripture powerfully speaks into the world that we find ourselves in: a world of uncertainty and upheaval. Last week, we looked at some of the language of this poem: the language of grace, sonship and intimacy. As we explored this language, it all directs us to the profound truth of the depth of the love of God for us. Cliché though it may seem, the reality is that we often do not live out of that love. We are insecure, anxious, seeking significance in work, status, possessions, family. However, when we grasp how loved we are,

we can begin to be hope bearers to those in our community.

Today want to look at verse 3.

In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks
That the LORD has planted for his own glory.

This is talking about us. It is a Kingdom passage. We are these great oaks. Remember that oaks are a symbol of strength, moral resistance, living right. (Righteousness means, living as God intends)

Planted by the Lord.

Huge amount of imagery here Tree imagery is used a lot in the Bible. The nation of Israel is seen as a tree. Individuals are described as being like a tree. Ps 1:3 Ps 52:8, Ps 92:12. Ephesians 3:17 Jeremiah 17:7-8 Kingdom is referred to as like a tree planted from a seed

This imagery points to a living relationship with God. Jeremiah and Paul talk of deep roots that gives us the ability to withstand heat and drought. All imply life and life coming from connection to the source. It is speaking of Christianity being about a living relationship. Not about a set of rules. Alternatively, principles. We are in a living relationship with a Living God who places his Spirit in us. Living Within us is life living water that we can draw on. Roots deep into the love of God mean that we are secure in him, as the world around us is fearful and turbulent.

For his own glory.

Seeds of good deeds will become a tree of life Prov 11:30

Wisdom is like a tree of life. Prov 3:18

Dream fulfilled is like a tree of life Prov 13:12

Gentle words are like a tree of life Prov 15:4

Tree without fruit will be chopped down Mat 3:16

Good tree produce good fruit bad tree produce bad fruit. Matthew 17:7

Kingdom grows like a tree. Bird will come and nest.

It will be a place of shelter. Matthew 13:32

Revelation. Tree of life that will bring healing to the nations. Rev 22:2

All saying the same thing. We are like oaks, strong, showing moral resistance and Producing fruit.



We are living beings, planted by the Lord, connected to him. We are to live lives producing fruit.

See the Proverbs passages. Gentle words. Good deeds (which means helping those who are poor, in need.) Bringing wisdom.

Fruit in the New Testament is seen as our character, the kind of person we are. Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit.

It is seen in our Actions; Sharing the faith we have.

Sowing into people's lives. 1 Corinthians 3:6-8.

Fruit comes as we die to ourselves. Isaiah talks of Israel being like a tree, cut down and out of the stump comes life. (Jesus) Isaiah 11:1-2

Jesus Christ came. Died for us. Out of that death comes new life.

Death bring life. Biblical pattern. For us to bear fruit that brings glory to God, we have to die to our old self. The sinful patterns, selfishness, self-effort has to die so God can transform us and renew us.

Application.

I want to give a shout out to the older generation that are here and honor the older generation here. They are like oaks that have withstood the battles, traumas of life, the storms and droughts. They have hung on to faith, and persevered. God sees that.

You bring glory to his name. You might think you are not doing much now. But you are standing like oak tree. Your life is testimony to the faithfulness of God.

I was listening to one of you this week telling how years ago their daughter died. Some of the team were in tears as you shared the story. You are here. You are still worshipping hanging on to God, and serving, despite the unanswered questions.

We need to honor the seniors amongst us. They are walking the journey. They show strength and faithfulness. They are being a place of shelter just by being, standing and remaining.

We have talked about the idea of God planting us, that we are living beings, dependent on a source outside of ourselves. Are you connected to the vine as it were? Jesus said remain in me and I will remain in you. Is the sap of Jesus Christ flowing through your veins this morning? Are connected to the source? We can't be hope givers unless the Spirit of Jesus Christ is empowering you. We need to connect day and day moment by moment to the Living well

I want you to consider something else. Have you considered that God has planted you where you are right now? In your Work place, school, neighborhood. God has planted you where you are.

He has placed you there. It is not an accident. He has you there to be his agent for his glory. When you go to work tomorrow your prime purpose is not the paycheck, but to bring him glory. In your entire do, do as if working for the Lord, for his glory. Col 3:23, Eph 6:7

That is your primary purpose. You are planted by the Lord for this glory. You don't need to go overseas. (well you do if God tells you to!) but your mission field is right here where God has planted you.

In times of uncertainty, fear, we are called to be place of shelter, like a giant oak. We are to live a life radiate a calmness and a peace, that reflects who are loved children of God, safe in his arms. While the World is rushing around panic buying, stressing, seeking significance in anything and everything, we are called to be strong oaks of righteousness

In times when truth is variable, moral values are flexible, and sexual integrity has vanished we are called to be oaks of righteousness.

The Lord plants us for his glory.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

1. Which older people best reflect to you the picture of "oaks of righteousness?"
2. Where are the areas where Christians today need to be showing moral resistance? I.e. standing firm on.
3. What are you doing to ensure your spiritual health and growth. What practices keep you connected in an intimate relationship with God. *(Consider as a home group signing up for the eight Spiritual challenges this year. That way you can encourage each other in them.)*
4. Jesus makes clear trees are expected to produce fruit or they are cut down or pruned. How is this worked out in our lives? What does it look like?
5. Discuss the idea that we have so emphasised grace that we have come to tolerate a Christianity that bears no fruit.
6. Brainstorm together on what person who is righteous looks like. I.E. what does "right living" look like in the 21st century.
7. Discuss the idea the God has planted you in your particular situation. I.e work, neighbourhood etc. How does this alter how you see your situation?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS