



Wednesday 29th July 2020 – Rooted in God

Psalm 1: 1-3

¹ Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

These last couple of months St Pauls Cathedral have commissioned some special reflections. In June they were given by Brian Draper, a speaker, retreat guide and labyrinth curator. This month they are given by Dr Ruth Valerio, Director of Global Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund. The reflections draw on her book *Saying Yes to Life: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2020*, which explores the creation narrative of Genesis 1.

Writing about trees she says: *“Loving trees isn’t separate to my faith: it’s an integral part of what it means to worship the Creator. And as I seek to live in ways that take care of trees, so too I want to be like the tree of Psalm 1, planted by streams of water, rooted deeply in God through the rhythms and practices of my life.”*¹

The questions that jump to my mind are what does it mean to live like a tree firmly planted by a stream of water? What are the rhythms and practices in my own life? How do I stay rooted in God?

Today’s reflection focusses on Psalm 1 and the tree planted by streams of water. Naturally trees have appeared in quite a few of the Wild Church reflections including the recent prayer trail and Earth day reflection in April.

Trees are an amazing! They are home to lots of animals and insects. Birds nest in the tree branches or holes, bats live in crevices of fissured bark and rabbits, foxes and badgers



Plenty of beautiful and ancient trees on our Norfolk pilgrimage

¹ <https://www.stpauls.co.uk/learning-faith/adult-learning/daily-reflections/saying-yes-to-life-reflections-for-july-2020>

burrow down within the root system. Trees give shade to passers-by or livestock. Last week myself and Aly were enjoying a staycation and enjoyed walking various trails. At times we really appreciated the shade of a lofty bough.

So what does it mean to live like a tree firmly planted by a stream of water? The answer comes in the verse before. It means to meditate on Gods law day and night. This is God's word to us. What God has to say to us about who he is, how he wants us to live and what his plans and intentions are for us.

How easy do you find that? For me I find it a challenge. Perhaps work demands more and more. Our families need more attention. The digital age is faster and increasingly constant, and even more so since lockdown. It is challenging to slow down and meditate and think through our daily habits, relationships, opportunities, where we spend our time, what we think of ourselves, perhaps where we fall short. But there is a place where I find it easier to be with God and take the time to do this – out in the landscape under the trees.

One of my favourite writers John, O'Donhue, speaks of this praying with landscapes in his book 'Walking in Wonder: Eternal Wisdom for a Modern World'. In the full chapter he specifically mentions mountains, water and trees as elements of the landscape that draw him to the presence of God. These three elements have contributed much to my own experience of God.



London Plane tree, Bishops garden, Norwich

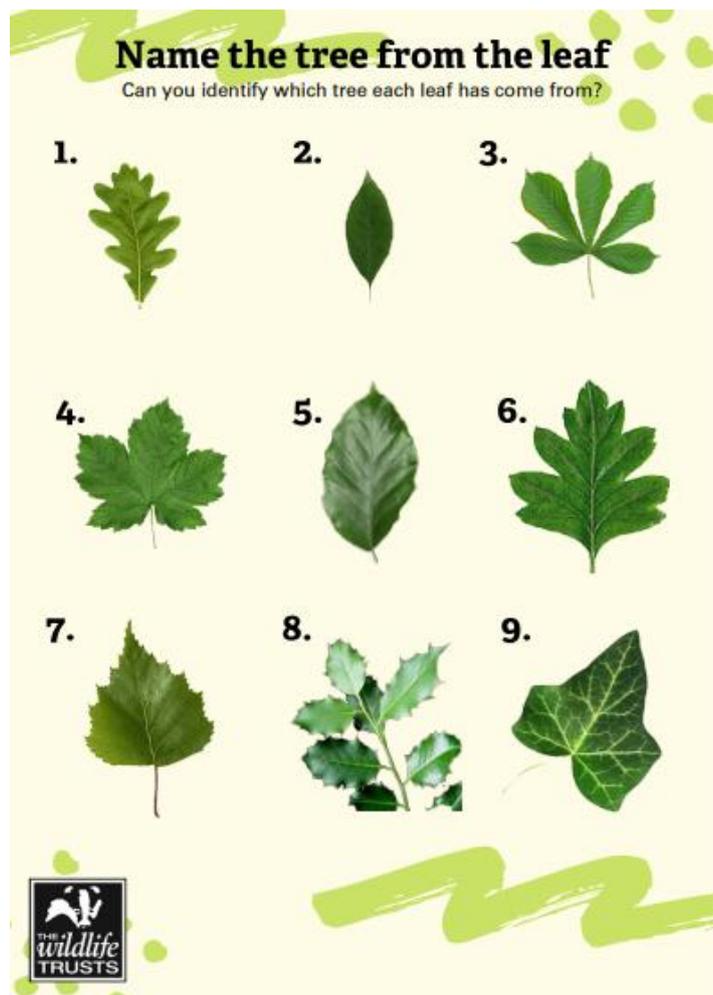
“One of the lovely ways to pray is to take your body out into a landscape and to be still in it. Your body is made out of clay, so your body is actually a miniature landscape that has got up from under the earth and is now walking on the normal landscape. If you go out for several hours into a place that is wild, your mind begins to slow down, down, down. What is happening is that the clay of your body is retrieving its own sense of sisterhood with the great clay of the landscape...I also think that trees are incredible presences. There is incredible symmetry in a tree, between its inner life and its outer life, between its rooted memory and its external active presence. A tree grows up and down at once and produces enough branches to incarnate wild divinity. It doesn't limit itself—it reaches for the sky and it reaches for the source, all in one seamless kind of movement. So I think landscape is an incredible, mystical teacher, and when you begin to tune into its sacred presence, something shifts inside you.”

God can be discovered all around us, in all the different parts of the landscape of life. Making time to be with God and meditate on God's word and spend time speaking to God and listening in prayer helps us to develop deep roots. We can become like the tree planted by streams of water. When challenging times come we can still thrive as we are connected to the source.

In today's activity which has been filmed (link: <https://bit.ly/3f8sPVJ>) I invite you to take some time to sit and reflect. You will need an image of a tree or you will be encouraged to draw your own so grab a pencil and something to draw on. Using the image of a tree as our focus and the verses of Psalm 1 I invite us to reflect on what is good in our lives, what we rely on, what is important to us and where we are making time to be rooted in God. You can either watch the video to be guided through the activity or download the sheet² and complete in your own time. Share your reflection with a trusted friend and encourage one another to root yourselves in God. Perhaps the next time you see a tree, stop, be with it and listen.

Extra activity

Can you or your little ones name the tree from the leaf? Test your knowledge with the Wildlife Trusts question sheet and then take a look at the answer sheet on the following page (no early peeking!)



² <https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Tree%20of%20Life.pdf>

Name the tree from the leaf

Can you identify which tree each leaf has come from?

1. Oak



2. Ash



3. Horse Chestnut



4. Sycamore



5. Beech



6. Hawthorn



7. Silver Birch



8. Holly



9. Ivy

