

Something for the Heart: *Tree Rings*. . .

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. Colossians 1:11-12

I am spending this week at training for BeFrienders, a listening ministry of lay pastoral care. So I sat down Sunday afternoon to do my “homework” for Monday morning. One of the assignments was to reflect on our sense of call using an analogy of tree rings. The idea behind the rings is that all of our experiences build upon one another. When you look at the rings of a tree, you can see years where there was a lot of growth – times when the water conditions, nutrients and sunshine were perfect for maturation. Then there are years where little growth is seen – the dry years or times without enough fertilizer. Each ring, each year, tells a story. They do not disappear, but add on to the previous year, indicating new growth.

Sometimes there are signs of trauma, wind storms or fire that have damaged, but not destroyed, the tree. And in some places there are knots – imperfections that form when a lower limb dies off, but remains for a time, allowing the tree to grow around it. These are the hard places that resisted growth for a while.

As I reflected on my own history, I am able to see many people and experiences that have shaped my growth – both good and bad. I can look back and see the years of plentiful growth and years that were stunted. I can see storms and fires that have been weathered. And I can certainly see the knots in my life, those hard spots that have gotten in the way of growth. Yet those “knots” in my personality that I often see as stumbling blocks are just a part of who I am. I can’t cut them out, for if I do, they leave a gaping hole that would actually weaken me.

We all have those things in our past that we would like to erase. Yet the tree shows us that each ring, each year of growth, each experience, each knot shapes us into the person we are. So, today, celebrate the knots and the wind and fire damage – as well as the years of sunshine, water and abundant nourishment. For it is all these things that have helped you to grow into the unique individual and majestic tree that you are.

Quick Quips

God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars. ~ Martin Luther

“There is always music amongst the trees in the Garden, but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it.” ~ Minnie Aumonier

“Listen to the trees as they sway in the wind. Their leaves are telling secrets. Their bark sings songs of olden days as it grows around the trunks. And their roots give names to all things.”
~ Vera Nazarian