

20018 CHURCH/TREES

TODAY I AM GOING TO TALK ABOUT TREES. THIS IS LARGLY BECAUSE OF MARY HALL.

MARY GOT ME STARTED ON THIS IDEA BY RECOMMENDING THE BOOK, "THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES'. IN PAST TALKS, I'VE REFERRED TO NATURE AND NATURAL PHENONEMA, SO I CAN SEE HOW SHE THOUGHT OF ME WHEN SHE LEARNED ABOUT THIS BOOK. (THERE IS ALSO RECENTLY PUBLISHED ---SECRET LIFE OF BEES, KURT SAGER'S STILL WATERS; THE SECRET WORLD OF LAKES—BUT I THINK THIS WAS THE FIRST.

I AM ALSO HERE BECAUSE OF MARY'S DEDICATED AND THOUGHTFUL LEADERSHIP AS OUR LAY PASTOR, WHICH ALLOWS MANY OF US TO SHARE OUR THOUGHTS FROM THE PULPIT. THANK YOU MARY FOR GIVING OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY A SENSE OF WELCOMING – AS WELL AS A SENSE OF PARTICIPATION.

SO – ABOUT TREES. THIS IS ALSO AN APPROPRIATE TOPIC BECAUSE MY *FATHER* NOT ONLY LOVED TREES BUT DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO THEM. HE JOINED THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE IN THE DAYS OF ITS INFANCY – IN THE 1930'S DURING ROOSEVELT AND THE DEPRESSION. HIS FIRST JOB WAS ESTABLISHING AND RUNNING CCC CAMPS, CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS==AS YOU KNOW THE BEAVERKILL CAMPSITE WAS BUILT BY THE CCC . THE CCC WAS A PUBLIC WORK RELIEF PROGRAM FOR UNEMPLOYED, UNMARRIED YOUNG MEN, 18-25. 1933-42.

ANOTHER EARLY JOB WAS FOLLOWING OLD ROADS,
SOMETIMES HIKING AND WALKING THROUGH THE NANTAHALA
NATIONAL FOREST IN NORTH CAROLINA TO FIND THE BEST
POSSIBLE SITES FOR FIRE TOWERS . HE SPENT HOURS-DAYS AND
WEEKS IN THE WOODS.

HE LOVED THIS LIFE AND THE AMAZING FORESTS. A SONG I
REMEMBER HIM SINGING WAS ABOUT A LOVE FOR TREES.

WHEN THEY CUT DOWN THAT OLD PINE TREE
AND CARRIED IT AWAY TO THE MILL
TO MAKE A COFFIN OF PINE
FOR THAT SWEETHEART OF MINE
WHEN THEY CUT DOWN THAT OLD PINE TREE.

BUT SHE'S NOT ALONE IN HER GRAVE TONIGHT
FOR THAT'S WHERE MY HEART WILL ALWAYS BE
FOR THEY CUT OUT MY HEART
AND THEY BURIED IT AWAY
WHEN THE CUT DOWN THAT OLD PINE TREE.

WELL - MY FATHER DIDN'T JUST LOVE TREES—HE ALSO FELL
IN LOVE WITH MY MOTHER WHOSE FAMILY HAD LIVED IN THAT
AREA FOR GENERATIOIINS.

HE AND MOTHER BUILT A LOG CABIN IN THE 1930'S FROM
CHESTNUT TREES THAT HAD BEEN STRUCK BY THE BLIGHT. YOU
MAY HAVE HEARD OF THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT BLIGHT . THIS

DESCRIPTION FROM THE BOOK **‘THE OVERSTORY’** BY RICHARD POWERS GIVES A VIVID PICTURE OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE MAGNIFICENT TREES.

THE SOUTHERN CHESTNUT TREES FORMED NEAR-PURE STANDS FOR MILES ON END. IN THE CAROLINAS, TREES OLDER THAN AMERICA GREW TEN FEET WIDE AND A HUNDRED AND TWENTY FEET TALL. WHOLE FORESTS OF THEM FLOWERED IN ROLLING CLOUDS OF WHITE. A SINGLE TREE MIGHT YEILD AS MANY AS FOURTEEN THOUSAND PLANKS.

AND THEN THEY ALL DIED. FOUR BILLION TREES IN THE NATIVE RANGE DIED. NOTHING COULD STOP THE CHESTNUT TREE BLIGHT— AND SOON THE FOREST WAS FILLED WITH THE TALL STRAIGHT GREY WHITE SKELETONS.

I REMEMBER THOSE WHITE SKELETONS—THAT STOOD FOR UP TO FIFTY YEARS AFTER THE TREES WERE KILLED.

MY PARENTS CABIN WAS BUILT IN AN IN-HOLDING OF THE NATIONAL FOREST AND OUR EVENING ENTRTAINMENT REALLY WAS SITTING BY THE FIRE AND TELLING GHOST STORIES OR LISTENING TO DAD – WHO LOVED TO READ THE POET ROBERT SERVICE’S **THE CREMATIOIN OF SAM MCGEE**—BUT ALS HIS QUOTE: *CAN’T YOU HEAR THE WILD? IT’S CALLING YOU.*

THE FIRST POEM I MEMORIZED WAS **TREES** BY JOYCE KILMER—NOW OFTEN DISCOUNTED AS SENTIMENTAL POETRY, BUT I STILL LOVE IT.

I THINK THAT I SHALL NEVER SEE
A POEM AS LOVELY AS A TREE.

A TREE WHOSE HUNGRY MOUTH IS PREST
AGAINST THE EARTH'S WET FLOWING BREAST;
A TREE THAT LOOKS AT GOD ALL DAY,
AND LIFTS HER LEAFY ARMS TO PRAY;
A TREE THAT MAY IN SUMMER WEAR
A NEST OF ROBINS IN HER HAIR
UPON WHOSE BOSOM SNOW HAS LAIN;
WHO INTIMATELY LIVES WITH RAIN.
POEMS ARE MADE BY FOOLS LIKE ME,
BUT ONLY GOD CAN MAKE A TREES

NOW IT'S FINE TO TALK ABOUT TREES – BUT I WAS ALSO
CURIOUS TO SEE IF THIS SUBJECT FIT INTO THE SUGGESTED BIBLE
READINGS FOR TODAY.

THE 2ND SAMUEL PASSAGE, ONE OF THE SADDEST PASSAGES IN
THE BIBLE IS ABOUT BOTH THE LOVE AND TREACHERY BETWEEN
FATHER – KING DAVID- AND HIS SON, ABSALOM.. THIS TIES TO MY
SUBJECT BECAUSE IN THIS PASSAGE, **ABSALOM IS KILLED BECAUSE
OF A TREE**; I QUOTE;

**ABSALOM WAS RIDING ON HIS MULE, AND THE MULE WENT
UNDER THE THICK BRANCHES OF A GREAT OAK. HIS HEAD
CAUGHT FAST IN THE OAK, AND HE WAS LEFT HANGING BETWEEN
HEAVEN AND EARTH, WHILE THE MULE THAT WAS UNDER HIM
WENT ON. AND TEN YOUNG MEN SURROUNDED ABSALOM AND
STRUCK HIM AND KILLED HIM.**

(I FIND THAT PHRASE; HANGING BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH INTERESTING----BUT THAT EXPLORATION IS FOR ANOTHER DAY)

THEN THE CUSHITE CAME; AND THE CUSHITE SAID, "GOOD TIDINGS FOR MY LORD THE KING! FOR THE LORD HAS VINDICATED YOU THIS DAY, DELIVERING YOU FROM THE POWER OF ALL WHO ROSE UP AGAINST YOU.'

THE KING SAID TO THE CUSHITE, "IS IT WELL WITH THE YOUNG MAN ABSALOM?" THE CUSHITE ANSWERED, "MAY THE ENEMIES OF MY LORD THE KING, AND ALL WHO RISE UP TO DO YOU HARM, BE LIKE THAT YOUNG MAN."

THE KING WAS DEEPLY MOVED, AND WENT UP TO THE CHAMBER OVER THE GATE, AND WEPT; AND AS HE WENT HE SAID, "O MY SON ABSALOM, MY SON, MY SON ABSALOM! WOULD I HAD DIED INSTEAD OF YOU, O ABSALOM, MY SON, MY SON!"

ALSO IN THE PASSAGE I READ EARLIER, IN 1ST KINGS; A JUNIPER TREE SHELTERED THE PROPHET ELIJAH FROM QUEEN JEZEBEL'S PURSUIT.

THERE ARE OTHER REFERENCES TO TREES IN THE BIBLE, FOR INSTANCE THERE IS AN APOCRYPHAL TALE WHICH TELLS OF HOW THE INFANT JESUS AND HIS PARENTS WERE HIDDEN FROM KING HEROD'S SOLDIERS BY A JUNIPER TREE.

YOU MAY KNOW THE LEGEND OF THE DOGWOOD—THAT DOGWOOD WAS USED FOR THE CROSS. BUT NOW, THE DOGWOOD GROWS SO CROOKEDLY THAT IT CANNOT BE USED AGAIN AS A CROSS.

AND THE DOGWOOD BLOSSOMS ARE SHAPED LIKE A CROSS WITH A YELLOW CROWN IN THE CENTER AND AT THE TIPS OF THE PETALS BRIGHT RED SPOTS REPRESENTING THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

AS WE ALL KNOW – THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF GENESIS CENTER AROUND A TREE . IN THE CHRISTIAN/JEWISH CREATION STORY, THERE WAS THE FAMOUS TREE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. IT WAS CALLED THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL AND ADAM AND EVE WERE FORBIDDEN TO EAT FROM THAT TREE.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE REPRESENTS, IN MY OPINION, THE INEVITABLE FACT THAT EVERYONE MATURES, LEAVES THE INNOCENCE OF CHILDHOOD REPRESENTED BY THE GARDEN OF EDEN, AND MUST GO OUT INTO THE WORLD WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOOD AND EVIL FORCES IN THE ADULT WORLD.

THERE WAS ANOTHER TREE IN THE GARDEN, IN GENESIS 3;23/24 GOD STATES ABOUT ADAM;: *LEST HE PUT FORTH HIS HAND AND TAKE ALSO OF THE **TREE OF LIFE**, AND EAT, AND **LIVE FOREVER** -- --- HE DROVE OUT THE MAN; AND HE PLACED AT THE EAST OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN CHERUBIMS, AND A FLAMING SWORD, WHICH TURNED EVERY WAY, TO KEEP THE WAY OF THE TREE OF LIFE.*

THE TREE OF LIFE SEEMS DIFFERENT FROM THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE., BUT ACCORDING TO WIKAPEDIA;

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE, CONNECTING TO HEAVEN AND THE UNDERWORLD, AND THE TREE OF LIFE, CONNETING ALL FORMS OF

CREATION, ARE BOTH FORMS OF THE WORLD TREE OR COSMIC TREE AND ARE PORTRAYED IN VARIOUS RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES AS THE SAME TREE .

THE TREE OF LIFE APPEARS IN BEGINNINGS OF ALMOST ALL RELIGIONS.

GAUTAMA SAT UNDER A BO TREE WHERE HE ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT AND BECAME THE BUDDHA. PLATO SAT UNDER A PLANE TREE AND ATTAINED THE MEANING OF PLATONIC LOVE.

PETER MATHESSION WRITES ABOUT THE BO TREE – OR BAOBAB TREE AS IT IS KNOWN IN TIBET, WHERE MATTHIESON WENT TO SEARCH FOR THE SNOW LEAPORD. I QUOTE;

THE WOMEN ARE OUT GATHERING ROOTS AND TUBERS AND ALSO THE SILKEN GREEN NUT OF THE BAOBAB WHICH, POUNDED ON A STONE AND COOKED A LITTLE PROVIDES FOOD FOR 5 MONTHS OF THE YEAR. IN RAINS THE BAOBAB GIVES SHELTER AND IN DROUGHT THERE IS THE WATER THAT IT STORES IN ITS SOFT HOLLOW. PERHAPS THE GREATEST BAOBAB WERE ALREADY FULL GROWN WHEN MAN MADE RED ROCK PAINTINGS AT DARASHAGAN..

TO GET EVEN MORE PERSONAL, IF YOU CUT THE HUMAN BRAIN IN HALF, THE VARIOUS SYNOPSIS AND BLOOD VEINS CREATE A DESIGN THAT IS CALLED THE TREE OF LIFE.

In 1837, Charles Darwin sketched a simple tree in one of his notebooks. That iconic image encapsulated Darwin's big idea: that all living things share a common ancestor. Ever since then,

scientists have been adding names OF NEWLY DISCOVERED SUBSTANCES TO THIS TREE OF LIFE.

IN FACT—JUST THIS MORNING I SAW A REVIEW IN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, OF A NEW BOOK, **THE TANGLED TREE** BY DAVID QUAMMEN. THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK WAS INSPIRED BY THE PHYLOENETIC ‘TREES’ ONCE DRAWN BY RESEARCHERS TO DEPICT EVOLUTIONARY RELATIONSHIPS. THE AUTHOR MAINTINS THAT A TREE *“SPEAKS OF THE SHIFTING FORTUNES, THE PULSES AND FADES, THAT ARE BASIC TO EVOLUTION.*

TEILHARDT DE CHARDIN, A FRENCH JESUIT CATHOLIC PRIEST, WHO WAS BORN IN 1881, MAINTAINED IN HIS BOOK, “THE PHENONOM OF MAN” THAT EVERYTHING IN THE UNIVERSE IS ON A JOURNEY THAT WILL CULMINATE IN WHAT HE REFERS TO AS ‘**THE OMEGA POINT**’

ACCORDING TO CHARDIN, EVERY SINGLE THING – NOT JUST HUMANS BUT EVEN ROCKS , GRAINS OF SAND OR CERTAINLY TREES HAS A LEVEL OF CONCSIIOUSNESS AND IS MOVING IN A SPIRAL DIRECTION – *WITH* EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE – TOWARDS THIS OMEGA POINT WHICH IS THE FINAL POINT OF DIVINE UNIFICATION.

HE MAINTAINED THAT WHEN THE EARTH REACHES ITS OMEGA POINT, EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS WILL BECOME ONE WITH DIVINITY.

THIS IS SIMILAR TO THE CONCEPT OF NIRVANA, AND ALTHOUGH I WON'T MAKE AN ARGUMENT FOR OR AGAINST CHARDIN'S THEORY, I DID FIND HIS ARGUMENT THAT EVERYTHING HAS A LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS INTERESTING. AND THIS BRINGS ME BACK TO WHAT INITIALLY ENCOURAGED ME TO TALK ABOUT TREES. THE BOOK '***THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES***'.

THE SUBTITLE IS; *WHAT THEY FEEL, HOW THEY COMMUNICATE—DISCOVERIES FROM A SECRET WORLD*

WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAILS ABOUT ALL THE THINGS PETER WOHLLEBEN WRITES— HE MAKES A CONVINCING ARGUMENT THAT THE FOREST IS A SOCIAL NETWORK. TREES WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND, OF COURSE, CONTINUE THEIR SPECIES. THEY WARN EACH OTHER OF DANGER BY EXCRETING CERTAIN SUBSTANCES, THEY SHARE NUTRIENTS WITH THOSE THAT ARE SICK THROUGH THEIR INTERTWINED ROOTS. HE MAINTAINS THAT TREES DON'T JUST HAVE A LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS, THEY ALSO BUIILD 'KNOWLEDGE' DURING THEIR CENTURIES OF LIFE.

BARBARA KINGSLOVER, IN HER REVIEW OF
WOHLLEBEN'S BOOK WRITES:

Trees do most of the things you do, just more slowly. They breathe, eat and have sex. They communicate, learn, remember and record the important events of their lives. With relatives and non-kin alike they cooperate, forming neighborhood watch committees — to name one example — with rapid response networks to alert others to a threatening intruder. They manage their resources in bank accounts, using past market trends to predict future needs. They mine and farm the land, and sometimes move their families across great distances for better opportunities. Some of this might take centuries, but for a creature with a life span of hundreds or thousands of years, time must surely have a different feel about it.

BOB BODDY – WHO HAS A TREE SERVICE – SO HE BOTH TAKES CUTS DOWN TREES AND ALSO SAVES THEM, WAS AT OUR HOUSE THURSDAY AFTERNOON. WE WERE LOOKING AT AN OLD MAPLE THAT HAS LOST HALF OF ITS TRUNK AND NUMEROUS BRANCHES. WE ASKED BOB HOW LONG HE THOUGHT IT COULD LAST. HE SAID, “DON’T ASK ME, IT’S UP TO MOTHER NATURE. BUT IF YOU LOOK AT IT YOU CAN

SEE IT'S BEING PROTECTED BY THAT OAK AND MAPLE ON EITHER SIDE OF IT. THEY SHIELD IT FROM THE WIND. SEE THERE'S A BREEZE IN THOSE TREES BUT HARDLY A RIPPLE IN THIS OLD MAPLE. THEY TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER.'

I ASKED HIM IF HE HAD READ 'THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES'. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD AND SAID, 'NEVER HEARD OF IT—BUT I KNOW TREES,'

ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT TREES IS 'THE NOVEL **THE OVERSTORY**; BY RICHARD POWERS. THAT I MENTIONED EARLIER DESCRIBING THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT BLIGHT.

NINE CHARACTERS ARE INTRODUCED IN THE FIRST SECTION OF THIS NOVEL . BUT THE REAL PROTAGONISTS ARE THE TREES THAT FORM THE OVERSTORY AROUND THEM. EACH CHARACTER IS DEEPLY AFFECTED BY A TREE OR FOREST OF TREES.

IN THE NOVEL, WHICH IS DIVIDED INTO 4 SECTIONS, 'ROOTS, TRUNK, CROWN AND SEEDS. TREES BRING THE CHARACTERS TOGETHER – IN A VIOLENT STRUGGLE AGAINST A MORTGAGED TIMBER COMPANY THAT IS LIQUIDATING ITS ASSETS, INCLUDING ONE OF THE LAST VIRGIN STANDS OF CALIFORNIA REDWOODS.

IN FACT, ONE OF THE FIRST ENVIRONMENTAL FIGHTS I HEARD ABOUT WAS THE FIGHT TO PROTECT THE REDWOODS – THOUSAND YEAR OLD TREES WERE BEING CUT DOWN TO MAKE PICNIC TABLES.

BARBARA KINGSOLVER ALSO WROTE ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD TREES: And for all that, trees are *things* to us, good for tables, floors and ceiling beams: As much as we might admire them, we're still happy to walk on their hearts.

PETER MATTHIESIN ALSO WROTE ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BAOBAB; KNOWN AS THE TREE OF LIFE;

TODAY YOUNG BAOBAB TREES ARE KILLED BY FIRES, SET BY THE STANGERS WHO CLEAR THE COUNTRY FOR THEIR HERDS AND GARDENS AND THE TREE WHERE MAN WAS BORN IS DYING OUT IN HAHDZA LND

Some of Africa's oldest and biggest baobab trees have abruptly died, wholly or in part, in the past decade, according to researchers.

The trees, aged between 1,100 and 2,500 years and in some cases as wide as a bus is long, may have fallen victim to climate change, the team speculated.

“We report that nine of the 13 oldest ... individuals have died, or at least their oldest parts/stems have collapsed and died, over the past 12 years,” they wrote in the scientific journal *Nature Plants*, describing “an event of an unprecedented magnitude”.

THERE ARE DIFERENT ESTIMATES FOR THE NUMBER OF TREES ON THE GLOBE—VARYING FROM 400 BILLION – OR 61 FOR EACH PERSON TO 3 TRILLION – 422 PER PERSON. BUT 15 BILLION ARE LOST EVERY YEAR. THERE ARE ONLY HALF AS MANY TREES TODAY AS THERE WERE WHEN MAN FIRST WALKED THE EARTH. AS A PRIMARY SOURCE OF OXYGEN, IT SEEMS WE SHOULD ALL BE PAYING ATTENTION.

IN THE NOVEL, **THE OVERSTORY** THE QUSTION IS POSED—DO WE HAVE ANYTHING TO LEARN FROM LIVING ORGANIZISMS THAT WERE HERE MILLIONS OF YEARS BEFORE HOMO SAPIENS?

WHAT DO ALL THESE IMAGES AND LEGENDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS TELL US? WHY IS TALKING ABOUT TREES EVEN APPROPRIATE IN THIS CHURCH?

WE DON'T HAVE TO WORSHIP TREES TO RESPECT WHAT THEY STAND FOR: RESILIENCE, PATIENCE, FLEXIBILITY, AND EVEN COMMUNITY.

WE CAN THINK OF TREES AS SYMBOLS – A SYMBOL THAT REPRESENTS THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF LIFE. IT CAN REMIND US OF THE COMPLEXITY OF EVERY SINGLE LIVING UNIT. THE TREE OF LIFE CAN BE a symbol of growth and strength. A symbol of immortality. A **tree** grows old, yet it bears seeds that contain its very essence and in this way, the **tree** becomes immortal.

IN NATURE, TREES DIE A DIGNIFIED DEATH. THEY FALL TO THE GROUND WHERE THEY RETURN TO THE EARTH—BUT NOURISHING NEW PLANTS ALL THE WHILE.

TEILHARDT DE CHARDIN SAID:

The profoundly 'atomic' character of the universe is visible in everyday experience, in raindrops and

grains of sand, in the hosts of the living, and the multitude of stars; even in the ashes of the dead.

*AND IN THE BOOK I MENTIONED EARLIER, **THE SECRET WORLD OF LAKES**, THE AUTHOR CURT STAGER WRITES: WE ARE NOT SEPARATE FROM NATURE, WE **ARE** NATURE, AN ANCIENT TRUTH THAT CAN PERHAPS MOST CLEARLY BE SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF LAKES.*

STAGER FINDS HIS MESSAGE IN LAKES – I FIND IT IN TREES.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A 'TREE HUGGER' TO FEEL THAT A TREE IS A FRIEND. A TREE IS STEADFAST, STRONG AND BEAUTIFUL. A TREE IS A MESSAGE THAT OUR LIFE ON EARTH IS TIED CLOSELY TO ALL **OTHER** LIFE ON EARTH.

WITH THE TREES IN THE FOREST, WE ARE A
COMMUNITY. WE ARE A TEAM ---NOT JUST
AMONG OURSELVES, BUT A TEAM WITH THE
INCREDIBLE FORCES OF NATURE.