

They pay attention to they ways in which those majestic old trees are changing with the seasons, not staying the same forever, but evolving and growing. Sometimes shedding old branches so that new growth might have space to flourish.

But they also know that, for all sorts of reasons, not everyone in the field will be able or willing to find shade under those old trees high up there on the hills, and so they nurture the saplings already growing, and seek out fertile soil in the field to plant new trees, new places where shade can be offered from the heat of the sun.



Some of these are planted where people are already gathered, bound by common interests, or partnering with other groups. Some are in places where they can see that there is need. Some of these new saplings grow and thrive, others don't, but that's ok, they learn something new either way.



And the sun beats down, and life in the field goes on.

And the people of the Community Of The Trees hold on to that vision, that one day every single person in that field will know that they are welcome, know that they are loved, know that there is a place for them in the shade and shelter of the trees.



And The One Who Gives Life To The Trees looks down, and sings to themself an old old song:

*Happy are those whose delight is in the word of the Lord,
They are like trees planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do they prosper.
(Psalms 1:1-3)*



Rev'd Rich Clarkson, July 2024


ST PETER'S, KINVER ☩ ST MARY'S, ENVILLE

SEEKING GOD'S VISION:
THE PARABLE OF THE TREES

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a field which lies under a blazing hot sun. The sun beats down, and life in the field goes on. At either end of the field the ground rises to a hill, and on each of those hills, watching over the field between them, stand two magnificent old trees.



Each tree is not far off a thousand years old, and for all that time people have gathered in their shade to meet, to rest, to learn, to sing, to grieve and rejoice, to mark the beginning and end of life, to tell stories of The One Who Gives Life To The Trees, to eat and drink and share in the life of the Community Of The Trees together.

 From the branches of those trees the birds fly. Some stay close by, some travel around the world, and when they return they share stories and wisdom from other trees in other fields where they have found shelter and rest.


And the sun beats down, and life in the field goes on.

But these two venerable old trees are not the only trees in the field. In the centre of the field stands a younger tree with broad strong branches, under which people come and go, some stopping to dance, others to eat, still others to learn. Another tree nearby was planted by a different community, but shares the same purpose.



Over the years other saplings have grown in the field, some planted intentionally, others carried to fertile soil on the breath of the wind. Some of these trees have grown and matured, and themselves have become places where people gather.

Over here children and their parents congregate under a slender Birch tree to play, and craft, and tell their stories. Over there is a crowd of old cars parked under a wide Beech tree, drawn together by that shared love, but finding so much more in its shade.

 Other saplings have perhaps flourished for a time, then returned to the soil, but that is not wasted either, as the soil

itself is nourished and enriched by what once was.

All across the field people gather, and play, and argue, and work, and live their lives. Some seek out the trees' shelter whenever they can. Some like to stop by but only when nobody else is there. Some come to marvel at the beauty of the trees, but never make their way into the shade.




Some never set foot beneath a tree. Maybe because they have found shade elsewhere, in a cave or beneath a cluster of wildflowers. Maybe because they have been hurt in the past by a falling branch. Maybe because they're afraid they don't know how, or maybe because they don't know that they are allowed.

And the sun beats down, and life in the field goes on.

But the people of the Community Of The Trees have a dream, a vision, a hope. That one day every single person in that field will know that there is a place for them in the shade. And so they begin to work to make that vision a reality.



They begin by seeking to understand the trees better, and in doing so, they seek to know more deeply The One Who Gives Life To The Trees. They know that, for those who are new to the shade or just exploring it, and for those who have lived their whole lives under the branches, there is always more to learn, to explore, to experience, and so they make space for questioning, learning, growing together.

 They make space to listen to the wisdom of the birds, bringing back stories from far across the seas of how Trees in very different places are thriving and growing, and they send their own stories back in turn.

They know that as they grow more confident in their love for The One Who Gives Life To The Trees, then they will become more confident in inviting others into the shade which the Trees offer.