

“ONLY GOD CAN GROW TREES”

BY KENNY KUBACH

Trees have always fascinated me. As a youngster my family vacationed in the Florida. My Mother, knowing that I was captivated by trees, would scout for magnificent trees indigenous to the climate, like the Bald Cypress with its “knees”. I would sketch trees that I had just seen for the first time. As a Boy Scout I can recall learning to identify as many trees as I could. I can remember asking my Father if the Sycamore tree I had seen for the first time was “diseased”. (I am still laughing at myself) It is important to know conifers from broadleaf trees for fire building. My Scoutmaster Staff is made from hardwood. I am a skilled wood carver of neckerchief slides. You can get a lot of “therapy”, while camping with your sons, carving wood. In fact, the forest with its diverse family of animals, birds, butterflies, bees and fungus can give you a taste of God’s Kingdom. Recently, I traveled to Big Sur, Muir Woods, Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks. After all, the cathedral-like, world’s tallest Redwood trees, among the oldest living things on Earth, are a tree-huggers dream date. Once surrounded in Big Sur by these cinnamon-colored giants, the silence is deafening. The forest of these goddesses seemed deserted, not even a mouse. Any sunlight reaching the forest floor beams in like a high intensity laser through their crowns. Mostly, the sun’s rays are diffused by water mists creating a peculiar backdrop of otherworldly magnitude. These goddesses have magical spirit, good vibes, if you will, whispering sweet nothings in your ear that purges, renews and preserves you forevermore. Then again, could these vibes be His marvelous Spirit encouraging me to have enthusiasm for living? After all, who else could play a part in growing trees 30 feet around and over 300 feet tall with a root system only 13 feet deep? Moreover, can we be sure it is He who grows trees?

If all the greatest engineers that ever lived were assembled in a lodge in Heaven, could they have invented a material of such wisdom, strength, and beauty as wood? I believe all they would have ended up with is sawdust. Further, although operative Masons can build cathedrals that reach toward Heaven with scaffolding, a Redwood tree can achieve hugeness without. We can create useful tools made from wood, such as the gavel, rapping our way to further education, yet wood itself is the invention of greatness.

The first task that God gave Adam (Genesis 2:19), and a lot of us have been working at it since, is to identify, name and classify trees. Why would God decide in His Wisdom this information is of most importance? First and foremost, He knew the importance of education. Nature is the grandest conceivable subject to begin an educational institution as it has been unfolding endlessly before us to this day. His beneficence had the “skinny” on that one because He created it. Further, He knew that planting that seed in Adam, Divine intervention, if I may, would challenge his mind to new heights. Likewise, He knew that once knowledge took root in Adam’s mind, his thirst for further Light would grow a pillar man of hugeness in wisdom, strength and beauty.

If God has created everything, surely the diversity of trees reflects his fertile mind. He has placed each one in the environment best suited for it. Further, trees have adapted to their changing environments, for if not, trees could not live where He intended them to live, thus explaining His beneficence. In the end, changing the environment is among His best endeavors, e.g. The Flood. His coastal Redwoods are subjected to severe flooding, burying them in silt that would kill any other tree. This tree immediately sends up root fingers off its buried lateral roots to the surface and above fast. The giant survives as its root system grows out from the buried trunk just below the new surface from latent buds, growing bigger roots than at lower levels. The result is truly remarkable anchorage system, steadying this goddess for thousands of years.

Her bark is up to a foot thick, shielding its living core from forest fires. And even if this goddess is indeed laid to rest, those root fingers can produce a new live tree among ashes. Even more startlingly, her cones are so tiny it takes 100,000 seeds to weigh just one pound. Living hugeness from something that petite, packed with such potential energy, proves His magnificence, demanding reverence! Boundless knowledge from such a small vessel, the skull, planted with His seeds, proves that Only God Can Grow Trees!

This spring make your Mark next to His by planting a tree. Although I have been green long before it became fashionable, I work to keep my carbon footprint less than my size 13(47 Euro). I planted a special Mark a few years ago. When James C. “Jesse” Owens, 1936 Olympic star athlete, returned from Germany with his four earned gold medals, it was of minor significance and mostly unknown, that he also brought with him an unearthed Black Oak sapling from the Black Forest. Possibly, Jesse felt that “magical” Spirit in the Black Forest as I did in Big Sur. The “prize” I have is a piece of heartwood on my desk from a downed Redwood by lightning. He planted his in the courtyard behind James F. Rhodes High School. I have been watching his peculiar tree grow since 1980. Her unusually shaped acorns found their way into my pocket one day. There are now two Black Oak trees in Cleveland.

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