

A Rose at the Heart of a Tree

By Catherine Slight

We were sad when our big, old plum tree contracted a disease that couldn't be treated. Its life had come to an end.

When it was cut down we were amazed to see what looked like the picture of a rose at the heart of its trunk.

It's very natural to see lines inside a tree, marking the stages of its growth. But I was so pleased with the rose-like image in ours.

I keep this slice of tree trunk in my room where I can see it.

A reminder of Jesus

That tree was always a blessing to us, but when it lost its life we saw its very heart. This makes me think of Jesus, whose great heart of love for us was revealed when he gave his life and died to take the punishment we deserve for our sin.

Then there was that rose-like picture.

Roses are known for their wonderful scents. So again this tree reminds me of Jesus. As we get to know him we become more aware of him drawing near in different ways.

We may sense him being very close when we are on our own, or it could be in church during a time of worship, or as the Bible message is shared.

Whatever the case, the presence of Jesus can be like a delicate and very beautiful perfume.

Naturally, the beautiful scent of a rose can be all around and we breathe it in. It's wonderful when we are aware of the presence of the Lord all around us and deep inside as well.

A sweet fragrance

The Apostle Paul writes about "the sweet fragrance of Christ" himself and the sweet fragrance of knowing him.

Then he goes further and says that we followers of Christ are the fragrance of Christ that rises up to God our Heavenly Father.

I can be the fragrance of Christ – if Christ is the centre of my life and means everything to me.

Paul also tells us that that this fragrance of Christ comes from us through what we are. Then it is sensed by other Christians and also by those who are not.

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us spreads and makes evident everywhere the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of Him.

For we are the sweet fragrance of Christ [which ascends] to God, [discernible both] among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing..." (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 – Amplified Bible)

Refreshing fruit

Our tree always produced lots of delicious, sweet, juicy plums that we enjoyed and were able to share with others.

Many a time, when Lin and I had been working hard in our garden, we would sit down for a few minutes and munch on plums from our tree. On every occasion we would feel invigorated as the sugars in the fruit gave us fresh energy.

We loved that tree with its beautiful blossoms followed by delicious fruit.

Jesus offers each one of us the fruit of forgiveness for our sin and this is absolutely wonderful to taste. And just as we felt refreshed and strengthened by the fruit, when we meet with Jesus, spiritually he invigorates and strengthens us.

Cut down

Our plum tree was chopped down because of disease.

Jesus did not die through any disease he himself had. He died voluntarily to take the punishment for our sin – a spiritual disease that brings deadness to the relationship with God that we have been created to enjoy.

And doesn't it warm our hearts when we meet Christians who are enjoying a close relationship with Jesus, which shows because they themselves remind us of him? This is because they have died to self and are following Christ.

Dying to self and following Jesus

It also challenges me that I need to die to any of my own wants or aims that are not in line with what I know God wants for my life.

Jesus said,

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Luke 9:23 (New Living Translation)

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.” *Galatians 5:24 (New Living Translation)*

He said that he himself had to do this.

“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” *Galatians 2:20 (New Living Translation)*

I'm glad that slice of the trunk of our tree was handed to me. In its heart is still the image of a rose reminding me of Jesus!
It stirs me to be more like Jesus today.

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