

July 23, 2017

Sabal Palmetto

READ: Proverbs 10:25 (Common English Bible)

“After a whirlwind passes by, the wicked are no more, but the righteous stand firm forever.”

MEDITATE:

This official Florida state tree boasts a higher wind resistance than any other palm, according to a research study conducted by Mary Duryea, University of Florida associate dean of research, and reported in an issue of *Coastal Living* magazine.¹ Consequently, this is one of the trees most favored by landscapers when planting by the shore. Strong Caribbean winds have little effect upon the Sabal Palmetto. They remain, for the most part, unshakeable in all conditions of weather.

A major theme of Proverbs, and notably of this passage, is that how we choose to live has ultimate consequences. Those who live foolishly are those who have chosen to live according to every desire of their heart. This is a decision to ignore the wisdom of God and God’s direction for living. When the storms of life blow, as they inevitably do for each of us, we are swept away. This is not God’s punishment for ignoring God’s wisdom. Becoming “swept away” by the strong winds that beat against us, from time to time, is the natural consequence of the poor decisions we make. It is no different from the natural consequence of choosing to plant a tree by the shore that has low wind tolerance.

A poor landscaping choice, when selecting a tree to plant near the shore, is the Washington Fan Palm. This tree scores low on wind-resistance. The selection of this tree to plant near the sea indicates that no care was given to the decision or that the conventional wisdom for landscaping was ignored. The inevitable result, during a tropical storm, is that this tree is likely to be uprooted and swept away. The landscaping will be, as Proverbs states it, “no more.” It is simply a natural consequence of a poor landscaping decision.

Proverbs announces that God has rigged the universe for righteousness – that is, life that is built upon wisdom shall, “stand firm forever.” God’s ways are not simply a preference that God has for our lives. God understands what makes life work, and what makes life fail. God’s wisdom, shared generously in the scriptures, is simply a gracious invitation to live wisely, that we may endure the storms that come in every life. And when the strong Caribbean winds of hardship and difficulty blow across our path, we will stand firm. That is because our life has been planted on the enduring foundation of God’s wisdom.

¹Marisa Spyker, “5 Trees to Plant by the Sea: What works (and what doesn’t) when it comes to planting trees by the shore,” *Coastal Living*, March, 2013.

