

**5-9 From Tales to Heads** Jer 29:10-14

I was kind of expecting We Three Trees of Orient Are...

Moms: remember changing diapers and looking upon your new child, trying to imagine what she will look like when she grows up; what he will be like when he is in high school; what kind of person she will marry? God has the same dreams and more about us.

**From tales to heads; we need stories that turn us right side up.** Stories like the one we've heard from our children that help us see what is true.

God said this to his people long ago: ***For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.***

Our children have reminded us that **when we open our spiritual imaginations to what we might become, God finds very important work for us to do.** When God uses us, we grow and are blessed. When our culture uses us, we are diminished and dying.

Because we have been indoctrinated by cultural values of success, we think *I'm not a good reader so I'll never be smart; or I'm not good at sports so I'll never be a hero; or I'll never find love because I don't look like Barbie or Ken* (no, the other Ken). We need true stories that show us how we can serve God no matter who we are or what we can do.

Children, you know those three trees weren't perfect. They had knots and blemishes. Yet in the hands of a skilled craftsman, they became perfectly prepared for their purpose.

God has a history of using people who aren't perfect. God used **Noah** the drunk; **Abraham** the liar; **Jacob** the deceiver; **Moses** the murderer; **Rahab** the prostitute; **David** the adulterer; **Thomas** the doubter; and **Paul** the persecutor; to name a few.

God uses those with little bless many; like the **boy** with a lunch of five loaves and two fish or a **woman** who gave a penny which was all she had; God uses the rich like **Zacchaeus and Lydia**; and the poor like **Lazarus, Onesimus** and almost all the disciples.

God uses the strong like **Sampson** and the small like **David** because God does not look at our external characteristics for what is needed, but at our hearts. **Samuel** was prepared to serve God from childhood. **Moses** became the instrument of God at the age of 80. Our purpose can be revealed anytime we give ourselves to God.

Our text in 2 Timothy says that God uses different kinds of people for different kinds of service. ***In a large house there are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for special use, some for ordinary.*** <sup>21</sup>***All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work.***

This simply means that God gives unique work to some and ordinary work to others. We don't have to be Billy Graham or Mother Teresa. You may become someone of special use or you may become the servant behind the scenes; the faithful believer serving food at a shelter or tutoring a child. You don't have to be famous or exceptional to be extremely effective in the Kingdom of God.

I like the old Lutheran hymn that says, ***We give Thee but Thine own, Whate'er the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee.***

Those three trees...**did they give what they had or what they didn't have? Were they used to make things out of wood or things out of gold? Weren't they used for who they were rather than who they weren't?**

God isn't waiting for you to be St. Francis or Saint Catherine before leading you to divine purpose. God isn't waiting until you have something you don't yet have before using you to

bring love and salvation into this world. As the hymn says, *whatever the gift may be*, we give it back to God, just like those trees.

I was in a pastors' conference this past week and Mike Queen was one of the participants. For those of you who don't know, Mike was an associate pastor here back in the 80s and is now pastor of Wilmington's First Baptist Church.

Mike was telling us that some of his friends had started a scholarship in his honor at Wake Forest. But they did not want him to get the big head about this, so they created a subtitle for the scholarship that read: *If God can make a minister out of Mike Queen, God can do anything with anybody*. A country boy from the sticks of W. Virginia went off to Wake Forest and eventually gave what he had and who he was to God. And God has used him well.

I've already told you the story of how a kid with Cerebral Palsy helped me realize that I really was a sinner in need of forgiveness from God. That kid did this not by going to seminary and preaching; not by having a really hot band; not by being a popular writer; but simply by expressing his love of Jesus in an awkward, slurred but powerful way. He was giving what he had to God, not waiting until he had something else.

*We give Thee but Thine own, Whate'er the gift may be...* You may have the same barrier I had for years; thinking that I had to be someone else to be used by God; that I had to be more like George Truett or Lottie Moon for God to use me. This isn't the case.

And for the longest time, I thought God only used my righteousness in his service. But now I'm convinced from the stories in the Bible that God uses very flawed people, sometimes even because of their failures. Only God can do this.

Will you today give God what is already God's, whatever that gift may be? Will you be faithful in giving your gifts, your experiences; your money; your intelligence; your talents; your all to God?

Spirit Of The Living God Fall Fresh On Me  
spirit Of The Living God Fall Fresh On Me  
melt Me, Mold Me, Fill Me, Use Me  
spirit Of The Living God Fall Fresh On Me