

God's Three Trees
Traditional Folk Tale
Author Unknown
Paraphrased by John W Nichols

Far away on a hillside grew a forest of trees - little trees and big trees, young trees and old trees, tall trees and short trees. The trees were very happy with life just as it was there on the hillside. They loved the warm sunlight of summer, spring's cool, gentle rains, the gorgeous red and gold leaves of autumn, and winter's blanket of soft glistening snow. But sometimes, too, they spoke of the future and the things they would like to do and be when they grew up.

One said, "You know, I would like to be a baby's cradle. I have seen people come into the forest carrying little babies in their arms. I think a baby is the sweetest thing I have ever seen, and I would like to be made into a baby's bed."

A second tree spoke. "That would not please me at all. I want to be something important. I would like to be a great ship, strong and stately. I would like to cross great oceans and carry cargoes of gold."

One little tree stood off by himself, apparently in deep reflection, but he did not speak. "And what would you like to be?", asked the Mother Tree. "Have you no dreams for the future?" "No dreams", he answered, "except to stand on a hillside and point to God. What could a tree do better than that?" Mother Tree looked at him fondly. "What indeed?" she said.

The years passed and the trees grew taller. One day men came to the forest and cut down the first tree. "I wonder if I will be made into a baby's cradle now. I hope so because I've waited so long", he whispered.

But the little tree was not made into a cradle. Instead he was cut into rough pieces and carelessly put together to form a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. He was heartbroken! "I do not like this at all", he wailed. "This is not what I planned — to be shoved into this dark stable with no one to see me but the cattle."

But God, who loves little trees, whispered, "Wait. I will show you something." and He did. For —

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

*When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds {began} saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.
(Luke 2: 8-16 NASB)*

In the stillness of the night God had laid there his own little Baby — The Son of God. The manger quivered with delight. "Oh, this is wonderful!", he whispered. "In all my dreams I never thought I would hold a Baby like this one. This is better than all my planning. Why, I'm part of a miracle."

And out on the hillside, the trees of the forest clapped their hands because their brother, the little manger, had seen his wish come true.

Months passed by, and men came to the forest to cut down the second tree. "I wonder if I will be made into a great ship now," this one thought. "I have waited so long. Now maybe I will do the great things of which I've dreamed."

But the little tree did not do great things. He was not made into a great ship, but instead he became a tiny fishing boat, owned by a simple fisherman named Peter. The little boat was most unhappy. One day he stood by the shores of the lake and pondered while Peter washed his nets. "To think that my life has come to this!", he said. "Just a little fishing boat! And Peter is not even a very good fisherman."

But God, who loves little trees said, "Wait, I will show you something." And He did. For -

One day out from the crowd came a Person, called Jesus. He sat down in the little boat and taught the people. He spoke words of such wisdom and beauty that the multitude, and even the little boat, listened eagerly. When Jesus had finished speaking, He told Peter to launch out into the deep and let his nets down. And there were so many fish that the net broke! The little boat trembled, not from the weight of the fish, but from the weight of wonder in his heart. "This is wonderful!", he whispered. "In all my dreams I never thought I would carry a cargo like this. Why, I'm part of a miracle. This is better than all my planning."

And out on the hillside, all the trees of the forest clapped their hands because their brother, the boat, had seen his dream come true.

Weeks went by, and men came to the forest to cut down the third little tree, the one that had wanted to just stand on a hillside and point to God. He was most unhappy. "I do not want to go into the valley", he thought. "Why couldn't they leave me alone?"

But the men did not leave the little tree alone. They tore away its branches, cut into its bark, and deeper, into its very heart. They cut it apart and put it together again, in the form of a rude cross. The little tree quivered through all its being.

"This is terrible!", he whispered. "They are going to hang someone. Oh, I never wanted this to happen to me. I only wanted to point to God! This is awful!"

But God, who loves little trees, said, "Wait. I will show you something." And He did. For -

One day, outside Jerusalem, a great multitude gathered. In their midst was Jesus, and beside Him was the cross.

When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon ..., coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus...When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him...
(Luke 23: 26, 33 NASB)

The cross shuddered beneath its weight of agony and shame. Then suddenly a miracle happened.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.
Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"
(Matthew 27: 50-51, 54 NASB)

The little tree that had become a cross heard, floating down from the heavenly places, the echo of a remembered promise:

"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."
(John 12 :31-32 NASB)

And the cross began to understand. "This is wonderful!", he whispered. "I am part of a miracle. In all my dreams I never thought to point to God in this way. This is better than all my planning."

And out on the hillside all the trees of the forest bowed their heads and thanked God, because their brother, the cross had seen his dream come true.

And so it was. For hundreds upon hundreds of trees have stood on the hillsides down through the years, but not one of them has ever been able to point a man to God. Only the cross of Calvary can do that.

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
(John 3:16 NASB)*