

## LESSONS FROM THE SYCAMORE TREE

A. We all know the children's song that made the sycamore tree the most famous tree mentioned in the Bible.

1. We all remember the "wee little man" who climbed the sycamore tree "the Savior for to see" as He passed through Jericho.

a. And what did that tree happen to be doing there?

B. The Sycamore produced an inferior fruit to the fig tree, but was often planted on the side of a road to provide shade to weary travelers.

1. (Fausset's Bible Dictionary). "The tree is always green, & bears fruit often through-out the year, so that it is of much value to the poor.

2. The wood, though porous, is durable, & suffers neither from moisture nor heat; Egyptian mummy coffins of it are sound after entombment for thousands of years."

[There was an abundance of sycamore trees in the lowlands of Israel (1 Kings 10:27; 2 Chron 1:15; 9:27; Isa 9:10).

2 Chronicles 1:15 (Solomon's wealth)

15 The king made silver & gold as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones, & he made *cedars as plentiful as sycamores in the lowland.*

The Scripture shows us several lessons from the sycamore tree.]

I. THERE ARE NO UNIMPORTANT JOBS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. David would not build the House of the Lord, but he collected & organized all that was needed to complete the task by Solomon.

1. King David assigned Baal-Hanan to oversee what might be considered a rather unimportant job (1 Chron 27:28).

1 Chronicles 27:26

28 *Baal-hanan the Gederite had charge of the olive & sycamore trees in the Shephelah; & Joash had charge of the stores of oil.*

2. 2 Chronicles 23-29 contains the extensive work plan for the construction of the glorious Temple of Jehovah.

3. Baal-Hanan was in charge of the sycamore trees – which was not the most glamorous job to have but it was an integral part of the building of the Temple.

a. He was not one of David's might men or among the thousands of Levites serving in Tabernacle (2 Sam 6:1).

- b. His place was not among the skilled musicians who would “prophesy with lyres, harps and cymbals (1 Chron 25:1).
- c. He would not be a “captain of thousands & hundreds” (1 Chron 27:1) but his place was important.
- d. He had a place in the plan of God (in the lowlands), as do we all.

1 Corinthians 12:21-25

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, ***it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary***; 23 & those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, & our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

[But there is a second lesson we can learn from the sycamore trees placement in Scripture.]

## II. GOD REIGNS OVER ALL

- A. In Psalm 78, Asaph provides a vivid depiction of Israel’s history; he glorifies the LORD God for guiding His people despite their unfaithfulness to Him.

Psalms 78:40-53

40 How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness  
And grieved Him in the desert!  
41 Again & again they tempted God,  
And pained the Holy One of Israel.  
42 They did not remember His power,  
The day when He redeemed them from the adversary,  
43 When He performed His signs in Egypt  
And His marvels in the field of Zoan,  
44 And turned their rivers to blood,  
And their streams, they could not drink.  
45 He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them,  
And frogs which destroyed them.  
46 He gave also their crops to the grasshopper  
And the product of their labor to the locust.  
**47 He destroyed their vines with hailstones  
And their sycamore trees with frost.**  
48 He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones  
And their herds to bolts of lightning.  
49 He sent upon them His burning anger,  
Fury & indignation & trouble,  
A band of destroying angels.  
50 He leveled a path for His anger;  
He did not spare their soul from death,  
But gave over their life to the plague,  
51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt,  
The first issue of their virility in the tents of Ham.  
52 But He led forth His own people like sheep  
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;  
53 He led them safely, so that they did not fear;  
But the sea engulfed their enemies.

1. The sycamore tree stands as a testimony to the eternal will of God overruling the prideful plans of men, even Kings.
2. The LORD brought low the powerful nation of Egypt by destroying their ability to provide adequately for their citizens.

James 4:13-16

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such & such a city, & spend a year there & engage in business & make a profit." 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while & then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "***If the Lord wills, we will live & also do this or that.***" 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

[The sycamore tree stands as a reminder that God is in control of world events no matter what evil the nations may be plotting against His will.

But there is a ***third*** lesson for us from the Biblical account of the sycamore tree.]

### III. GOD OFTEN USES THE LIGHTLY ESTEEMED (DESPISED) TO TEACH HIS WILL

- A. The prophet Amos was a man of the earth, hardened by the difficulties & challenges of living & working in the great outdoors.

1. He grew up in the village of Tekoa (12 miles south of Jerusalem), & he was in that vicinity when the LORD called him into service.

- B. Later, the false priest Amaziah commanded him to stop prophesying against Jeroboam.

Amos 7:14-15

14 Then Amos replied to Amaziah, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for ***I am a herdsman & a grower of sycamore figs.***  
15 But the Lord took me from following the flock & the Lord said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.'

1. Amos was a simple man doing the great work of the Lord.
2. He had no credentials to make him stand out among the other prophets.
3. There were was no prestige attached to his name.
4. He came from no pedigree of orators who could boast of their training.
5. He was a preacher of the gospel of the Lord. That is all he was.
6. Who does that remind us of? Most of the apostles.

- C. Peter & John, & eventually all the apostles, were brought before the Sanhedrin.

Acts 4:12-13

12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." 13 Now as **they observed** the confidence of Peter & John & understood **that they were uneducated & untrained men**, they were amazed, & began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

1. The Lord needs a lot of men & women from Tekoa, & disciples like Peter & John.
2. What makes a difference is not the level of education or training but whether a person has "been with Jesus".

2 Corinthians 2:14-15

14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, & manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. 15 For **we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved & among those who are perishing;**

[Are we the fragrance of Christ in this world as Amos, Peter & John?

**Finally**, we pick up where we started.]

#### IV. TRUE REPENTANCE HAS ITS REWARDS

- A. The residents of Jericho must have thought Zacchaeus had lost his mind.

1. A grown man (a rich man in fine clothing) climbing a sycamore tree.
2. What man of importance & dignity, with any self-respect, would act like a child -- in public no less?

Luke 19:2-6

2 And there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector & he was rich. 3 **Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was, & was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.** 4 So he ran on ahead & climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, He looked up & said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry & come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 And he hurried & came down & received Him gladly.

3. Zacchaeus changed a lot of things that day, & Jesus rewarded him for his attitude of repentance.

Luke 19:8-10

8 **Zacchaeus stopped & said to the Lord**, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, & if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." 9 **And Jesus said to him**, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek & to save that which was lost."

B. In a sense, the Savior is looking for people to climb a sycamore tree.

1. People who will shed the garments of this world & seek the Lord with their hearts.
2. People who will pay no mind to peer pressure to in order to see Jesus & gladly accepted the will of God into his life.
3. People of Humility.
4. People who may appear to the world, small in stature but who have a giant faith.

1 Peter 5:6-7

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that ***He may exalt you at the proper time***, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

5. Zacchaeus was ONLY vertically challenged in the flesh, NOT IN HIS SPIRIT.

***This sermon is based on an article written by Kent E. Heaton --  
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