

Sermon Pentecost 4A - Drive-in Worship  
All Saints, Mt. Pleasant  
Rev. Ginger Litman-Koon  
June 28, 2020

“The Giving Tree,” by Shel Silverstein

Once there was a tree...and she loved a little boy. And everyday the boy would come and he would gather her leaves and make them into crowns and play king of the forest. He would climb up her trunk and swing from her branches and eat apples. And they would play hide-and-go-seek. And when he was tired, he would sleep in her shade. And the boy loved the tree...very much. And the tree was happy.

But time went by. And the boy grew older. And the tree was often alone. Then one day the boy came to the tree and the tree said, "Come, Boy, come and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy." "I am too big to climb and play" said the boy. "I want to buy things and have fun. I want some money?" "I'm sorry," said the tree, "but I have no money. I have only leaves and apples. Take my apples, Boy, and sell them in the city. Then you will have money and you will be happy." And so the boy climbed up the tree and gathered her apples and carried them away. And the tree was happy. But the boy stayed away for a long time...and the tree was sad.

And then one day the boy came back and the tree shook with joy and she said, "Come, Boy, climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and be happy." "I am too busy to climb trees," said the boy. "I want a house to keep me warm," he said. "I want a wife and I want children, and so I need a house. Can you give me a house?" "I have no house," said the tree. "The forest is my house, but you may cut off my branches and build a house. Then you will be happy." And so the boy cut off her branches and carried them away to build his house. And the tree was happy.

But the boy stayed away for a long time. And when he came back, the tree was so happy she could hardly speak. "Come, Boy," she whispered, "come and play." "I am too old and sad to play," said the boy. "I want a boat that will take me far away from here. Can you give me a boat?" "Cut down my trunk and make a boat," said the tree. "Then you can sail away...and be happy." And so the boy cut down her trunk and made a boat and sailed away. And the tree was happy ... but not really.

And after a long time the boy came back again. "I am sorry, Boy," said the tree, "but I have nothing left to give you - My apples are gone." "My teeth are too weak for apples," said the boy. "My branches are gone," said the tree. "You cannot swing on them - " "I am too old to swing on branches," said the boy. "My trunk is gone," said the tree. "You cannot climb - " "I am too tired to climb" said the boy. "I am sorry," sighed the tree. "I wish that I could give you something...but I have nothing left. I am just an old stump. I am sorry...." "I don't

need very much now," said the boy. "just a quiet place to sit and rest. I am very tired." "Well," said the tree, straightening herself up as much as she could, "well, an old stump is good for sitting and resting. Come, Boy, sit down. Sit down and rest." And the boy did. And the tree was happy

"Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones," Jesus said, "truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward" Giving need not be glamorous It simply needs to come from the heart. And yes, it still counts, even if you don't post a photo of it on social media, or write it up in the church newsletter.

In the words of the Master, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Then the righteous ask him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?" And his answer: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"

And this "reward," Jesus talks about, that comes with giving, it's not something we earn, or store up for the life to come. It's not something we wait to receive after death, but instead, it is the sweet inheritance of kingdom living that became ours the day we were washed in the water and received the gift Jesus gave himself to purchase for us with his blood.

The **evidence** that we have already begun to live into this inheritance is the unexpected joy we receive when we imitate Christ in true selfless giving. Not for show, not for credit, not because we have to, but because like the Tree, we have discovered that true happiness comes not from having more but from giving more. Like Christ, we have discovered that true freedom comes with laying aside the self and taking up the cross and following him. For it is in giving that we receive; It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying to ourselves, a little every day, that we begin to taste the sweet fruit of our eternal life.