

The Little Tree Who Didn't Want to Grow!

By John M. Swanson

Long, long ago there was a seed that dropped to the ground. It had floated in the wind for quite some time and finally landed. Soon it began to be pushed into the earth by the movement of the animals walking by from time to time. The rains came and went, the sun shined and soon this seed began to sprout and grow. As time always does, it passed slowly and this little seed began to be a small tree.

"You are a special tree," a voice said. "You are the chosen one in which something wonderful will happen."

The little tree wondered, "What wonderful thing could possibly happen to make me so special. There are thousands of trees all over the place and many of them are much older than I. Why have I been chosen?"

It pondered this question for many years with no answer. Soon the little tree was three feet tall and its roots began to go deep into the ground.

"Grow strong and tall," a voice said. "You are special and I want you to know that I am watching you as you grow."

The little tree now began to really wonder who this voice was because there were only other trees standing around and none had ever talked to it before. The question now became so important to the little tree that with all its strength it tried to talk to the tree closest to it. For a long time there was nothing. The little tree tried and tried but nothing but silence came from the big tree. The little tree kept trying day after day and finally one day it heard a very loud, "WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

"Who was that?" the little tree thought to itself. "Could it be that the big tree finally answered me?"

"Are you talking to me?" the little tree asked.

"Yes," said the big tree in a much lower voice. "What do you want from me?"

"I hear voices," said the little tree. "Someone keeps telling me that I am special and that they are watching me grow. The voice tells me that something wonderful is going to happen but the voice didn't say what it was or when."

"Hummm," said the big tree. "The only voice I ever hear is from the one who created all of us. Sometimes He speaks and I always know who He is. Everyone out in the forest knows that."

The little tree listened with great interest. "Now you have really made me wonder what the voice was talking about," said the little tree.

"You know, of course," said the big tree, "we trees are used for all sorts of purposes. Some are used for building homes and other types of structures, some are used for furniture and some are just used to provide shade. Each tree has a purpose and you have been chosen for one of those reasons. I cannot tell you what it is but each tree will provide something for someone."

The little tree began to feel proud that it would help in some way. "I wonder what my purpose is?" the little tree said to itself.

The little tree thought and thought for a long time about what it was it would do.

“Wait a minute,” said the little tree. “Does that mean I will be cut down and hauled away when I am big enough to be used. Oh, that might hurt. I don’t think I am going to like this after all.”

Laughter was heard throughout the forest.

“Don’t worry,” said the big tree. “It will only hurt for a moment. It won’t take them long to run a saw through you and you will come crashing to the ground with a loud noise. Everybody will get out of your way when you come down.”

“Oh,” said the little tree. “Is that what happens to everyone who gets used for something?”

There was silence for a long time. The big tree did not reply and the forest seemed to be unusually quiet. Years and years passed without another word being spoken about that subject.

One cool crisp morning, the little tree asked the big tree, “Are you still talking to me?”

For a while there was no answer. Then in a sort of quiet voice, the big tree said, “Yes, I am still talking to you. It’s just that most of us old trees have been here so long and although we provide shade, we aren’t used for any other purpose. At first it was a little funny when you reacted like you did, but then it sort of dawned on all of us that you have been singled out while the rest of us haven’t been. It hurt when we all began to think about not being used for anything other than shade. Do you understand what I am trying to say to you?”

The little tree didn’t say anything for quite a while. After a long period of thought though, it finally replied. “I understand how you all feel, but remember, I don’t even know what my purpose is yet. It may hardly be worth worrying about. I might just turn into a wall of a house or something.”

Suddenly without warning, the voice began speaking again to the little tree. This time it was different though. When He spoke, all the trees everywhere could hear His voice. It was as if He had called to order every tree in every country all over the world.

“At an appointed time, I will make an announcement concerning this little tree. At that time I will declare what purpose I have created this little tree for. Until that appointed time, I want all of the trees, especially those around the area of this tree, to protect it. Share your water with it. Help it grow. Allow your great branches to shield it from the wind and snow when it comes. You all have a purpose, and none of you are useless to Me. Everything I make has a reason and a purpose and don’t any of you think that I made a mistake in creating you.”

There was a deafening silence. Every tree, including the little tree, was speechless and stood in awe and wonder at what had just happened. The sound of the voice was so loving and kind. When all of the trees heard the voice speak, there was not a sound. All knew that God had spoken.

The little tree still wondered what special thing it was made for. Many years went by and soon the little tree was no longer a little tree. The little tree had seen many winters go by. It noticed, however, that as the winds blew and the storms came, it was always shielded by the other trees. Their great branches seemed to hang lower and it almost appeared that some were moving in a deliberate way as to allow the storms to hit them more that it would hit the little tree.

The little tree, now a much larger tree, felt so grateful for their help.

“Thank you all,” said the little tree now much larger.

“You’re welcome,” said the big tree that was nearest to it.

After a few moments the big tree said, “You know. I think sometimes God selects a lot of things for a purpose and when He does, some seem more important than others, but it’s not

really true. Everything God chooses IS important. It's nice to be chosen to do something special. Like you, for example. God has chosen you for an important reason and I think soon it will be revealed what that reason is."

Just as the big tree finished talking, there were sounds that could be heard in the distance.

"Hummm," said the big tree. "Wonder what that could be."

The sounds seemed to be getting closer and it sounded like men coming. In the far distance, faint voices could be heard speaking about searching for certain trees. Closer and closer they came.

Suddenly God's voice was heard by all the trees. "I want to make an announcement now concerning the little tree that I have been watching with such great interest.

"This tree was created to be the tree I shall die upon. I created it as a seed and watched it grow knowing that I would die upon it someday."

All the trees everywhere were in total shock.

"WHAT!" said the big tree. "Why in the world would you have to die? You are God. God doesn't die."

The little tree, who was now a large tree, stood in total disbelief. "I was created so that you could die upon me. I don't understand. I don't like being the one to do that. From now on, I won't grow. I won't drink water with my roots and I won't get any bigger."

The men who were heard in the distance were now very near.

"THAT ONE," said one of the men. "That is the perfect tree for a cross. It's perfect. It's not too large but not too small. It's even grown in such a way that it won't be hard to shape it into what we need. Cut it down!"

The little tree that is now a larger tree stood again in shock.

"NO," said the little tree who was now large. "What can it do? I don't want to do this."

The Lord finally spoke to the little tree who was now large.

"You don't understand. You see, if I don't die, all men will die and be lost forever. For me to die upon you when you are shaped as a cross will become a blessing. Right now to die on a cross is a curse. Right now all trees shaped into a cross are cursed and no one ever speaks of them. After I die, you will be spoken of forever. After I die, I will make the cross a blessing and a lot of people, possibly millions and millions will speak about you thousands of times over and over again. You will become the symbol of the greatest gift of all – Love and sacrifice. Because of your doing this, you will be honored forever and I will be able to save many from their sins if they believe in me."

Just as the Lord finished talking, the men were ready to cut the little tree, who was now a larger tree, down.

"I'll do it!" said the little tree who was now going to be the cross. "I will do it and I will be proud to serve you, Master. I will hold you as best I can and now I can't wait to be near you. Now I long for that moment to come so I can be close to you. Thank you for choosing me. I will not mind when they cut me down. I know it might hurt, but I don't care anymore. I want them to. I willingly offer myself to you."

The blade began to cut and, yes it hurt. It hurt real bad but the little tree, who was now going to be the cross, was soon cut all the way through. It fell with a loud crash. The other trees in the area all began to weep. Sap flowed down their branches onto their great trunks. Each one desired to be the cross but it was not for them to decide. The special tree whom God had chosen was already on its way to be shaped into a cross. It would not be long now for soon it would be standing on a hill between two other trees.

“Thank you, little tree.” said the Lord. “For now I can go ahead with my plans to save all who will put their trust in me. Now I can make it possible for all who will believe in me to go to heaven when they die.”