

Tree hugging

Julia McGuinness *reflects on* Psalm 1

Trees invite us to take time. Anchored in stillness, they patiently stand their ground, quietly confident in their beauty, offering shade, shelter and maybe fruit to all who pass by.

It seems only natural that a tree is rooted at the centre of this psalm, as an image of those whose lives are centred on the Lord. This tree is intentionally positioned by the stream, settled where its deepening roots can be nourished by life-giving water. And it is going nowhere. By contrast, the godless are in motion, wandering off on other paths, blown about by the winds of fashions and fancy. They take their ease only to mock the believers who are going nowhere.

Perhaps, at times, Christians may feel criticised for being unadventurous, or even boring, for simply remaining in place in stable, God-ordered lives. But, like the tree, their glory in God is truly measured over time, not space. A tree does not merely passively channel water; it absorbs it, transforming nourishment into growth, its distinctive stature and beauty ripening to fruitfulness in its season.

The psalmist pulls no punches. Those who presume to live independently of their creator may find short-term pleasure, but are on a course that ultimately diminishes them. Their focus on the self results in lives that are as insubstantial and fruitless as chaff. ☹️

Autumn thoughts

Seasonal eating

by Julian Smith

The change from summer to autumn should mark a change in the things we eat – out go the salads and new potatoes, in come the jacket potatoes and stews. Autumn's abundance should remind us of the delights of eating seasonally.

With the world as our larder the idea of eating seasonally doesn't exist. When nearly everything is available all year round at prices we're willing to pay, why not eat

strawberries in December? But there is a price to pay that goes beyond hard cash and it is paid in air miles.

The issue is far from straightforward, requiring us to balance the harm to the environment with the benefits that the responsible production of "exotics" brings to developing nations and communities. Schemes like Oddbox can help us redress our balance and be more in touch with the world around us. Helping us "live simply that others may simply live". ☺️

“How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.”

Psalm 36:7



Lord, we pray for the wisdom of stability. Help us to be as patient as the tree, trusting that, as our roots remain in you, we can weather whatever comes our way as we grow in fruitfulness. Amen.

Walking with Rosie

From of old

by Gillian Cooper

It is a lovely late summer day, and the tide is out. Rosie and I join many other dogs and their humans on the beach. Beyond the sand and the rock pools, I can see people bent double over the rocks, and I know they are looking for fossils – large ammonites visible on the rock

surface, smaller fragments to be collected. Rosie is more interested in the seaweed, though even she has to admit it is not really edible.

I think of the ancient creatures whose imprints and echoes I am seeing, and remember how comparatively brief has been the time of human history on our planet. These rocks were here before us, and may be here after us. And behind it all is God, the ancient of days, the originator and life-giver, beyond all time and eternity and yet, astonishingly, intimately involved in our small human and doggy lives. ☺️