

## Sermon by Diana Johnson

Trees and the Easter Story: Matthew 28: 1-10

St Mary and St Michael, Trumpington

**12<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – Easter Day**

**10am All-Age Service**

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O

Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. (Ps 19.14 alt.)

### **Talk 1:**

A story adapted from 'The Tale of The Three Trees'  
(a retold American folktale by A. E. Hunt)

Once upon a story, three, new, fresh, green trees began to grow and grow. What would they become when they grew up?

First Little Tree: (Looking up and pointing to the twinkling stars like diamonds in the sky.)  
"I want to be a treasure box coated in gold and filled with sparkling precious gems. I want to be the most beautiful box in the world."

The second little tree awoke to watch the silvery stream, streaking down the mountain side to the vast, blue ocean.

The second Little Tree said "I want to be the strongest sailing ship in the world to carry powerful kings across mighty seas."

Third Little Tree: "I don't want to go into the valley. I just want to point my branches up to heaven to remind everyone of God in heaven. I want to be the tallest tree on the mountain.

Days passed into weeks, weeks into months and months into years as the rains came and the sun shone on the trees until the trees grew tall and strong.  
Three woodcutters began to climb to the mountaintop.

First Woodcutter: "This beautiful tree is perfect for me to make a wooden chest." (He used his shining axe, felled the happy tree and cut it up with his saw.)

Second Woodcutter: "This strong tree is perfect for me to form and shape a boat for the sea." (His used his shining axe and felled the second happy tree.)

Third Woodcutter: "Any tree will do for me." (The third tree pointed to heaven as the unhappy tree was felled with the sharp shining axe.)

### Scene 2

The first little tree went into a carpenters' workshop and was carved into a fine animal feed box to hold the dusty hay for animals in a stable NOT A GOLDEN TREASURE BOX!

The second little tree creaked with joy as a boat builder began to shape, carve and nail pieces of wood BUT ALL IT BECAME WAS A STRONG, SIMPLE FISHING BOAT! It went into a lake where fishermen loaded it with dead and smelly fish because it was too weak for the sea.)

The third little tree was puzzled and confused as it was cut into STRONG BEAMS in a wood yard.

The third Little Tree said, in a sad voice: "All I ever wanted was to point my branches to heaven and God on the mountaintop and now I'm sad and I'm just left alone."

### Scene 3

As time passed by each tree nearly forgot their early dreams until something special happened. The first little tree saw dazzling, golden starlight pouring into the stable. A young woman picked up her new born, baby boy.

Mary wrapped Jesus in strips of cloth and laid him in the manger because there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

Joseph spoke gently. I wish I was at home in my carpenters workshop where I would make him a cradle."

Mary smiled "This manger in this stable is beautiful for our baby."

The First Little Tree knew the baby he held would become the greatest treasure in the world.

### Scene 4

One evening a stranger came with some of the fishermen to sail on the lake in the little boat but a terrible, thrashing thunderstorm arose. The little boat was not built for carrying so many men on stormy seas. The sleeping stranger awoke and stretched an arm over the angry water.

The Stranger just said "Peace be upon the lake."

The Second Little Tree knew he carried the most important King of the Heaven and of the Earth.

### Scene 5

It was a Friday, in springtime, when The Third Little Tree was pulled out into the dazzling sunshine where noisy, angry crowds gathered. People called out, "Long live the King of the Jews." They were laughing at the man and mocking the man who carried her up the hill.

The sad Little Tree felt long nails fasten the man to her new shape, which was a cross. She shuddered and shook and felt ugly and cruel standing upright, on the hillside, in the blazing sun. The sun went dark, the man cried out and everyone said, "He really was the son of God." On the Sunday morning everything shook and the Third Little Tree felt God's powerful Love from Heaven.

So you see, the First Little Tree became BEAUTIFUL.

The Second Little Tree became STRONG.

Finally, the Third Little Tree became the TALL symbol of the cross to remind us of God's love for EVERYONE at this special time of EASTER.

**I am** going to tell the whole congregation, adults and children, just a bit more about trees. Every tree is amazing and more and more we are realising the importance of planting trees and looking after them. Next time you are outside, or maybe through a window now, or from your balcony, or in your memory's eye, look more closely at the trees around us.

I am going to read them a poem about our wonderful trees that links them to some of our Christian beliefs about Easter.

## **Trees**

*by Jan Edmunds*

The beauty of trees is a joy to behold.  
For millions of years, they have watched life unfold.  
They give shelter to creatures and help them survive.  
They clean up the air to keep us alive.

Their wood's used for houses, in tables and chairs.  
It's made into windows, our doors or our stairs.  
Carpenter Joseph taught Jesus his trade.  
Ploughs, yokes and mangers by him were made.

The disciples went fishing in boats made of wood.  
When calming the storm in a boat, Jesus stood.  
Leaves of the palm tree were spread on the ground.  
For Jesus in triumph they were waved all around.

Soon after, he hung from a cross made of wood.  
On a hill far away with two others it stood.  
The third day after, he rose up again.  
Like the plants in the winter, through wind and through rain,  
Trees rest and are bare 'til the spring comes around.  
Then they burst into blossom and new life is found.

From trees we can learn a lesson or two:  
That life can be hard for me or for you.  
But when we feel down, there's some hope we can take.

Winter will pass, spring will awake:  
An adventure unknown, a new journey to make.

**Let us have a moment for reflection**

I'll read out, slowly that last verse again. As I do so, think about the words:

From trees we can learn a lesson or two:  
That life can be hard for me or for you.  
But when we feel down, there's some hope we can take.  
Winter will pass, spring will awake:  
An adventure unknown, a new journey to make.

Think about why difficulties can help us to learn important lessons in life. We are all, now, going through a tough time; there is always someone from school, at home, from work, or from the Church to whom you can talk.

Think, too, about the lesson of Easter. On the third day, Jesus 'burst into blossom and new life [he] found'. That's what we celebrate today, and it's a powerful reminder of God's triumph.

I'll finish off though, by asking you to think forward to the other side of this time of lockdown. What adventures are you looking forward to later this year?

*Prayer*

God of glory,  
by the raising of your Son  
you have broken the chains of death and hell:  
fill your Church with faith and hope;  
for a new day has dawned  
and the way to life stands open  
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**