

Coach House Church

BEACONS

VARIETY

2ND NOVEMBER 2020

I don't like the damp and dark days that seem to suddenly leap out in front of us at this time of year. I much prefer the long warm evenings of summer, when every window is open, when I can enjoy being outside in the garden, when friends can sit and chat long into the balmy evening. This is of course in the perfect scenario, in a not so muddled year as we have had in 2020. But I feel that I want the summer to last just a bit longer! However, there is one saving grace to soggy October and November – the Autumn colours in the plants and trees and there are also some lovely bright days, however short that can still be enjoyed if we take a little time to notice what is happening around us.

While I sat in my garden one morning I realised just how many different shapes and sizes of leaves there were. The ones on the Acer, the Japanese maple, were just starting to change colour and soon will be bright red. Leaves are one of those things that you just take for granted. They are just there. It is only in autumn when you realise just how beautiful they are.

Genesis chapter 1 says:

11 Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. God created a wide variety of plants and trees that would perpetuate through seed dispersal, germination and growth. It seems obvious but it is still amazing when you think that a small acorn can grow into a mighty oak tree, a conker transforms into a horse chestnut tree and those helicopter seeds become ash tree saplings which grow everywhere in my garden, thanks to my neighbour's giant ash tree!

When I think about the trees in my garden, I'm reminded of the cycle of nature, of God's original plan for things to continually grow, of a process set in motion when

the world was created. There is comfort in knowing that the same process continues thousands of years after it was set in motion.

Ecclesiastes tells us to not just be in awe of creation itself but to 'remember your creator in the days of your youth'. Before experience and the cares of the world divert our attention and energies, it is important to take time, to remember, to be in awe and wonder of the God of all creation.

Leaves seem such a simple object, adding colour and form to a plant. Yet, any internet search will tell you in detail the function of leaves as well as their complex structure. This is taken and summarised from britannica.com. Leaves are vital to the production of food for the plant or tree. Chlorophyll within the leaf is the substance that gives leaves their green colour and it also absorbs sunlight. The sunlight then creates a chemical reaction so that water droplets, H₂O, are divided into their separate components – hydrogen and oxygen. The oxygen is breathed back out of the leaves through pores on the leaf surface, putting oxygen back into the atmosphere. The hydrogen combines with carbon dioxide, the stuff that all living things breathe out of their lungs, in a process called photosynthesis, and so creates sugars that feed the plant.

Pretty amazing facts, and all that is happening within each leaf without us even really noticing. Everything in creation has a plan and a purpose, instigated by the creator.

Romans 1 says

20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. As days get shorter and cooler, less chlorophyll is produced and so leaves are no longer green but change into the range of glorious autumn colours. You don't have to know the science or even understand the processes involved but it is reassuring that the cycle of the seasons continues, especially when we have a year of uncertainties like this year.

I looked at the variety of leaves in my garden: bamboo, apple, ivy, oak, ash, cherry, wisteria ...and many more. It made me think that this world was designed with a high level of detail and to create interest. We know that trees are vital in transforming carbon dioxide into oxygen- essential to our life on earth, yet the process happens in such an interesting way, from giant forest trees to our garden perennials.

This made me think that variety and differences are reflected throughout creation-landscapes, weather conditions, foods, animals and people. How boring it would be if everywhere looked the same, food tasted the same and everyone we met was an exact replica of ourselves.

Whenever there is variety, there is also a hierarchy, a way that we list our favourites, the ones we prefer. This may be as mundane as preferred foods. Think about a tin of chocolates and which ones are eaten first...and which are left to last. It's usually the yellow wrapped caramels or the fudge ones are left to the last. Think about a multipack of crisps .. it's usually the prawn ones that are left to last. However, this can have serious implications if, in general society terms, we perceive certain people as more important than others.

When Jesus was on earth, he spent time and spoke to a variety of people. He was not exclusive to one group to the detriment of others. He acknowledged differences between people but at the same time recognised so much that they had in common. He spent time with rich and poor, those with high and low status, rulers, officials, religious leaders, ordinary people of all ages, children and also the outcasts of society. Think about who is recorded in the bible as meeting with Jesus: Zaccheus, a tax collector for the ruling Romans, despised by many Lepers who were outcasts and seen as unclean
Women and children who had little status in society
People with disabilities who could not support themselves and were forced to beg
Religious leaders who had status but no compassion for those they were responsible for
Jesus gave the same message to everyone, no matter who they were, regardless of their standing in society or their family background. He started from the premise that everyone was in need of a Saviour.

Romans 3:23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Jesus' mission is reported in Luke 19: 'For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.'

In John 14:6 Jesus spoke to one of his disciples, Thomas and told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. In fact, Jesus spent a lot of his time highlighting the inequalities of life and speaking directly to those who were left to last, who were seen to be on the lowest rung of the societal ladder and who had no voice of their own. While society rewards wealth fame and status, Jesus' clear message was that none of these attributes would gain entry to heaven or access to a Saviour.

Genesis 1:27 says

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

How can there be degrees of importance when we are all created in God's image? Jesus' message to the variety of people is a leveller – one message, one solution. No-one is perfect and therefore no-one can be in the presence of a pure and holy God. Jesus is the only true and acceptable sacrifice for our wrongdoings, imperfections and mistakes. Only through forgiveness, belief and trust in Jesus can we approach God our creator and enter heaven.

No matter how different we are, how interesting and individual we appear, how we are perceived by those around us, or how we see ourselves, the message of Jesus still stands.

Galatians 3 says: There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. When you are out and about, take a moment to look at the variety in God's creation and when you meet people thank God that we are all so different and yet we all can be part of the family of God, through our belief and trust in Jesus, our Saviour. Amen.



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