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Trees

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Trees

When we think of trees, those that are most familiar probably come to mind: pine trees, palms, flowering trees, fruit trees, small ones or giant redwoods, trees that are good for climbing and those that are best appreciated under a covering of snow. Trees are homes for birds and for bugs, and provide us with food, shade, and other material requirements, as well as the pleasure we receive from their beauty. Trees contribute to all life on earth by taking in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen.

The variety of the trees we know, and the diversity of size and shape of even the most familiar types of trees might lead us to wonder at the creativity they represent. Trees, among the many aspects of nature, are ideally suited for making human life on earth possible. But if we consider only the practical uses we can make of them, we miss more than half their purpose. When we consider trees in their colors, shapes, sizes, movements in winds or breezes, changes with lighting and with seasons, we receive them in their fullness as gifts that delight our spirits as well as serving some of our material needs.

We appreciate trees and many aspects of nature when we take time to reflect. We can pass by the same location more than once a day, focused on our destination or our next activity and not notice the natural environment through which we travel. We are busy persons, intent on all that we hope to accomplish. If we never notice the trees or some other part of the created natural world within which we live, all will continue to exist around us, but we will ourselves become like plants without water or sun. In order to fulfill our dreams and deepest desires, we need spiritual sustenance as much as we need food and drink. Many of us have learned that pausing to look out a window to notice the sky, plants, or any other aspect of the natural world, nourishes both our ability to accomplish goals and the worthiness of our purposes in achieving them.

Appreciating beauty leads easily and naturally to gratitude. When someone takes the time and effort to give us a gift, we usually want to thank that person. God has carefully and purposefully created our environment with the inclusion of trees in all their textures, colors, shapes, and sizes. We rightly praise artists for compositions they create of scenes that include trees. All that we can perceive with our external and internal senses has a creator whose act precedes the inspirations of artists and of all in nature that we find beautiful.

A gift is still a gift from the giver, even when someone does not appreciate or notice it. We often do things for others without expecting to be recognized or thanked. God gives us trees and all else that surrounds and sustains us for the same reason that we give to others some of what we have as well as some of who we are.

We delight in surprising people with material goods and expressions of our care for them. God is more than capable, and greatly pleased, to surprise us with unexpected gifts that have been frequently within sight and sound, but have gone unrecognized. Most of us can easily recall a time when we suddenly became aware of the strikingly lovely the way that light filtered through trees that we had passed many, many times before; or experienced a deep sense of well-being as we looked upon a setting that we had frequently viewed at other times.

The trees have not changed, nor the scenes about us. It is we who are changed as the God of all that exists creatively reaches out to us. If we choose to look for God's good gifts, rather than to only receive occasional surprises, we might begin by observing some trees.