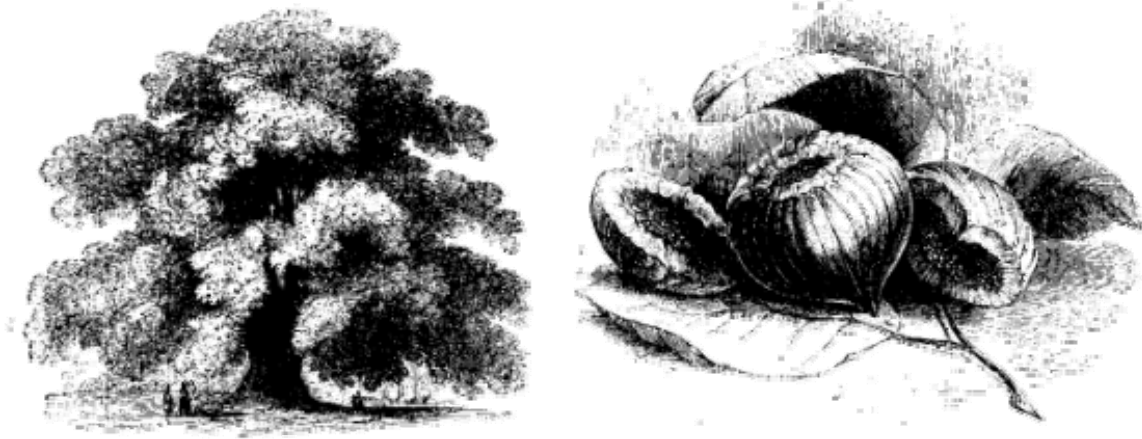


The Mustard Seed & the Sycamine Tree



I want to discuss verses 5 and 6 of the 17th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Which says, "And the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Here you can see how the Eastern people think and speak. The disciples ask the Lord to increase their faith; he answers by bringing in two apparently unrelated things, the mustard seed and the sycamine tree!

The mustard seed of the East is the smallest of all seeds, it's black, and if put into an eye, the person would hardly be aware that the seed is in his eye. But the mustard seed of the East does grow into a tree, as big as the apple trees in America. That is why Jesus said, in Luke 13:19, "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it."

"If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree ... " What has the sycamine tree got to do with the mustard seed, and what has the mustard seed to do with faith? The sycamine tree of the East is the wild fig tree, and produces fruit six times a year. But the people of the East despise this fruit, and won't eat it. Why this is, I do not know, but even if a man has had nothing to eat for two weeks, he wouldn't want to be seen under the sycamine tree, for fear people would think that he was gathering the fruit. If a man climbed a sycamine tree, the people would insult him more. They would say among themselves, "Poor old Smith must have gone bankrupt overnight. His poverty is so great that he has lost all self-respect and dignity, to be climbing up in a sycamine tree to gather the fruit."

So we read in the 19th chapter of Luke about Zacchaeus climbing up into a sycomore tree to see Jesus when he passed that way, because he was little of stature. Why didn't he get up on a housetop or a donkey? It is common place for people to go up on the flat

housetops of the East since there are always outside entrances and whenever important personages pass by everyone goes up to the housetops to be able to see him or many people get up on a camel or donkey. Since Zacchaeus was a rich man and could have easily afforded to do this, why did he climb a tree instead? The answer is that Zacchaeus was a rich Pharisee, who when he heard that Jesus was passing by, thought to himself, "I ought to humble myself. If I get up into the sycomore tree, people will despise me, but Jesus will see my humility and will see me up there when He passes."

When Jesus came by, He saw Zacchaeus there and called to him. He knew how greatly he had humbled himself by climbing up in that tree. Jesus once said [Matt.18:4], "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus knew that here was one man who had emptied himself of all pride, and had made room for Him in his heart, because "the LORD looketh on the heart"[I Samuel 16:7]. Zacchaeus had gotten rid of all his superiority complexes and pride; he knew what the people would say about him, but he did not care.

Again, in the 7th chapter of Amos, mention is made of the sycomore fruit. Amos had been preaching in Israel and was told to go back to Judah and prophesy there. Then in the 14th verse Amos answered and said, "...I *was* no prophet, neither *was* I a prophet's son; but I *was* an herdsman and a gatherer of sycomore fruit." Amos was saying that he was doing the most menial of all work. But God raised him up into a prophet! God has chosen the foolish and weak things, even a man who gathers sycomore fruit to make him somebody, to set him on the rooftops warning man to flee from the wrath to come!

Although the sycamine tree is a small tree, it has enormous, innumerable roots. There are so many roots spread far and wide and deep, that it is impossible to pluck a sycamine tree with all its roots with any modern gadgets, without leaving some of the roots behind. But with faith the size of a mustard seed, it is possible to perform two miracles: first to pluck the sycamine tree with all its roots; and second, to plunge it into the sea. One act of faith, as of a mustard seed, will perform two impossible things. This is possible for any of us, when we have the faith.

Many believers will say, "I do not have that much faith." But, a believer must never say that, otherwise, how was this believer saved? The only way to be saved is to be saved by faith. When you have enough faith to be saved, which is the first miracle, then you have faith enough to solve all of your problems also. This faith is still in you, because the Christ that you have received by faith is still in you. This is the truth that Jesus was telling the disciples, that you don't need an increase of faith, because if you have only a small faith, you can still say to the sycamine tree to be plucked up and it will obey you. With the faith that the believer has RIGHT NOW, he can do the seemingly impossible.

So many of us talk and complain about our problems, but do we have as many problems as the sycamine tree has roots? So many of us think that our problems are too numerous for the Lord to solve. But let us look at the sycamine roots, thousands of them: some as thick as my thumb, others as thin as my hair; some are deep, very deep, but by faith you can pluck them all up. So, no matter how big a debt you have, no matter how

big a cancer you have or what the doctors have told you about it; no matter how rude your children are; no matter how many enemies you have or how little money you have, you can't have as many problems as a sycamine tree has roots! If we have a little faith we can tell our problems, "Be thou plucked up in the name of Jesus Christ", and they will be plucked up and solved in his name! God Bless You.

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