

APPLE TREE DEVOTIONAL

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:3

“As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”

EXPERIENCE

Scattered throughout the woods, roadsides, and fields is the occasional, uncultivated apple tree. Apple trees are a unique treasure amidst the vast amount of other wild trees that bear no edible fruit. In autumn, the site of an apple tree with its gnarled branches weighed down by ripe red apples is a delight to the eyes. We have such an apple tree on the shore of Lake Gloria. Every fall as I canoe around the lake, I make a point of paddling by this beloved tree to pick an apple. There is something so satisfying in the process of assessing which apple to pick, and having found the biggest and ripest one, to reach up above one's head and pluck it from the tree. The mix of tartness and sweetness is a delightful taste. Bushels of fall apples for apple pies, dumplings, crisps, and fritters is one of my favorite parts about the fall season. However, it is not just the taste of baked goods that makes apple trees and their fruit such a pleasurable treat. I trust that meditating with me for a moment on apple trees will be spiritually enjoyable as well.

CONTEMPLATION

Often the apple tree is connected to the Garden of Eden. The fruit that tempted Adam and Eve is assumed to be an apple, even though the word apple is never mentioned. While we cannot know definitively what fruit tempted Adam and Eve, what we can say is that apples are fruit from a tree that are a “delight to the eyes” (Gen 3:6). A common idiom used to describe something cherished is “apple of my eye”. Apples have become an emblem of desire and delight. As a result of these connections, any time I see apple trees they have become a meditative prompt for me to consider the current temptations of my life. I contemplate the desires of my heart and what I am delighting in at present. King David, in Psalm 37:4, exhorts: “*Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*” We are tempted so quickly to abandon the Lord as our greatest delight because our disordered desires have their way in our hearts.

There is a famous hymn, *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* (see below), that combines the themes from Genesis 3 with the passage from Song of Solomon 2 to describe Jesus Christ as an apple tree—meaning as our deepest delight and most cherished relationship. Uncultivated apple trees brimming with fruit are unique, rare, and special according to Solomon’s bride in 2:3. Sitting in her groom’s shadow means enjoying his protection. Enjoying the sweetness of his fruit speaks to delighting in all aspects of her relationship with him. While certainly this passage does refer to the young love between this couple of antiquity, for most of church history this passage was seen as describing the church’s relationship with her husband, Christ Jesus. The passage, and the emblematic apple tree, prompts Christians to consider all the sweet benefits of being in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Application: What have you known of Christ’s protection? What sweet fruit has there been from your relationship with the Savior? Solomon’s bride in verse 5 cries out “refresh me with apples.” How has your relationship with Jesus been like enjoying a “refreshing” (v. 5) apple on a fall afternoon? Meditation upon

apple trees and apples implore us to assess whether Christ Jesus is the apple of our eye.

“As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love.” - Song of Solomon 2: 3-5

PRAYER

Lord God, as your beloved, I long to sit in your shadow and to know your protection over my life. Protect my eyes from any impure sight that would tempt me to delight in anything other than you. Protect my heart from disordered desires. Fill my heart with devoted love toward you O Christ! I have tasted and seen that you are good, your fruit is sweet to my taste. Bring me into your house that I may dwell there forever. Refresh me this day O Lord and renew my love for you. I ask it in Christ’s name. Amen.

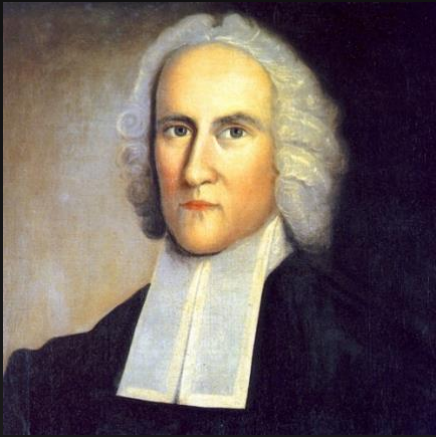
CONFIRMATION

The passage from Song of Solomon 2:3-5 listed above, as well as Song of Solomon 7:8 and 8:5, confirm that an apple tree and apples are Scriptural emblems. In 7:8 the Bridegroom says, “the scent of your breath [is] like apples.” In chapter 8, verse 5, the Bride says:

“Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor.”

These verses paint a picture of the connection between apple trees and apples to sensuous desire culminating in fruit—in verse 8:5 the fruit spoken of is the fruit of the womb.

- An apple tree is an emblem of the Church’s bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and spiritual fruitfulness. An apple is an emblem of desire and delight.



Jonathan Edwards

FROM *MISCELLANIES NO. 108*

“So that when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind, we may consider that we only see the emanations of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ; when we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see his love and purity. So the green trees and fields, and singing of birds, are the emanations of his infinite joy and benignity; the easiness and naturalness of trees and vines [are] shadows of his infinite beauty and loveliness; the crystal rivers and murmuring streams have the footsteps of his sweet grace and bounty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow, we behold the adumbrations of his glory and goodness; and the blue skies, of his mildness and gentleness. There are also many things wherein we may behold his awful majesty: in the sun in his strength, in comets, in thunder, in the towering thunder clouds, in ragged rocks and the brows of mountains. That beauteous light with which the world is filled in a clear day is a lively shadow of his spotless holiness and happiness, and delight in communicating himself.

And doubtless this is a reason that Christ is compared so often to those things and called by their names; as, the sun of righteousness, the morning star, the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys, **the apple tree** amongst the trees of the wood.”¹

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Miscellanies 1-500*, [WJE 13:279-280](#).