



DAY 40

Live Fully and Love Wastefully

Isaiah 43:2: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you".

Years ago, not long after moving into our current home, I was cleaning up the yard. There were some stumps in the front yard that I wanted to remove. They were too big to chop out by hand and I was too cheap to hire someone. As I gathered more and more sticks from around my yard, I had a “brilliant” thought: I’ll pile all these sticks on top of the stumps and burn them. I’ll get rid of the sticks and remove the stumps at the same time. Well, I did get rid of the sticks, but, as for the stumps, I was only successful at charring their outside.

Most of the stumps in my yard have been thoroughly penetrated by insects. In turn the opossums and woodpeckers tear apart the stumps in search of the insects. All this helps the stumps decay much more quickly. However, the stumps I tried to burn are as strong as ever; maybe even stronger. By burning the stumps I burned away the cellulose, the soft layer of the wood insects like to munch on. Left in its place is the charred, carbon-rich lignin which the insects will avoid. This hardened and much less nutritious lignin protects the wood.

I was reminded of my pyro-error after listening to Kathleen Lewarchik’s inspiring sermon. The trials and tribulations I have experienced in my life are like the charring of the wood. As I walk through life’s flames, and experience the love and compassion of the people around me, I come out a little more resilient on the other side. There’s an old saying that God only gives you what you can handle. I don’t believe that. I do believe that God is love and love is the most powerful and resilient force gifted to us.

God of wonder, I am grateful for the difficult times in my life. It is then that I experience the love of my friends and family given wastefully. Amen.

– Rick Painley