

The afterlife of a Christmas tree

“You can have any tree on the lot for five bucks,” he joked as I backed up to the growing pile of discarded Christmas trees.

“I will take them all,” I said with the same sarcasm, and began loading my van with as many trees as it would hold. I was on my sixth or 16th trip to the community Christmas tree recycle pile and was getting tired of the routine. I would go through the newly added trees and load those with plenty of green needles and without tinsel, fake snow or urine smell.

A few years ago I discovered that my wife’s goat herd loved Christmas trees. I threw our used tree on a burn pile only to watch it disappear in a feeding frenzy. After that I retrieved used trees from friends, neighbors, and the recycle pile. At first I was particular about the size, species and cultivation of a tree. A fresh, large and naturally grown fir tree with no signs of chemicals was preferred. But as trips mounted I would load any tree with needles that would stay on long enough for the trip home.

I began to develop an insight into the life of a Christmas tree. Like a Fourth of July bomb, it goes from valuable to worthless overnight. I began my tree gathering at the recycle pile when it was convenient for me but found it best to collect them with no onlookers. Most people, other than the mentioned salesman, would ask why I was “doing the opposite of everybody.”

Used trees leave their host differently. Once an older couple pleaded with me to

take theirs. First they unshrouded it and then began telling me about how wonderful it was, after which I felt like I was carting away their favorite pet. Other used trees had various attachments, including ornaments that were found only after the goats were done. My favorite tree had lights and stand still attached. I could only imagine somebody saying, “Christmas is over, and get this tree out of here right now!”

Goats welcome used trees with the same enthusiasm children have for decorating new ones. They dance around and maneuver with an attack strategy. They cooperate like workmen, even rolling trees over so they do not have to eat off the ground. They take short breaks sitting upon the ready-to-eat tree pile then move in like piranhas or the cartoon character “Sylvester the cat,” eating a fish and finishing with a bright shiny skeleton. They indiscriminately eat all trees and I do not know their favorite species. I always thought about their reaction to an artificial one. Affecting goats with a treated tree occurred to me, but then I realize that most trees are meant to be inside with people.

I am not sure of the origin of Christmas trees. I wish that we could decorate our lives with them throughout the year. But I have prolonged their beauty and usefulness by providing entertainment and food. The last lyric in the famous song “O Christmas Tree” when sung at our house will always be: “... How tasty are your branches.”

Wes Stonecypher is a Umatilla resident.



Wes Stonecypher

An answer to life’s problems

Have you ever felt like life is unfair? I have. I’m sure that if you’re like me, there have been plenty of times when you have experienced situations when you thought that you were the only one going through difficulty. Life can be so ugly at times.

I’ve discovered that when I have those feelings, there are at least three lies that slide into my mind. 1- No one else struggles like I do. 2- Bad things happen to me and not to them. 3- Others get what I think I deserve.

If I’m not careful, one of those thoughts can invade and twist the reality of life when I’m experiencing struggles. The truth is that every one of us will face times of difficulty regardless of what level of pain it may be.

There is an historical account found in the Bible (Book of Ruth) about two women who faced unbelievable circumstances that would have taken most of us down. Both women lost their husbands. Both Naomi and Ruth found themselves displaced in foreign countries. Both of them encountered hardships which, today, seem unimaginable. Yet, in spite of the ugliness and severe pain which each of them suffered, they not only survived, they thrived. In the end, each of them discovered not just healing, but also

redemption.

For many, today, surviving can seem almost out of reach. Circumstances can be so overwhelming that it feels as though the sense of wellbeing is slipping through their fingers.

Does that resonate with you? Maybe you are wondering if things will ever be better than they are right now. Sometimes it seems as though the easy sounding solutions our world throws out just don’t cut it. We try them. We run from one solution to another solution when the previous one doesn’t work.

In my life, I’ve discovered a ‘redeemer’ who loves me regardless of the circumstances I may face. A ‘redeemer’ who never turns his back on me. For you see, a ‘redeemer’ is one who pays the price for ransom; who buys back one who is unwanted. His name is Jesus.

Just like Naomi and Ruth discovered a ‘redeemer’ in their situations, I have been forever changed by the one and only ‘redeemer’ who promises what no other person or entity on earth can fulfill.

I know what you are thinking. That sounds too good to be true. But I have found that in a world of uncertainty, he is the answer to my doubt and insecurity.

Dave Andrus is pastor of New Hope Community Church in Hermiston.



Dave Andrus

LETTER

Pool before skatepark

I am disappointed that the city of Hermiston chose to build a skate park instead of

a covered swimming pool. I think the latter would serve a much greater population than the former.

Mike Mehren, Hermiston

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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