

Tuesday, December 23, 2014

*...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. **Ephesians 3:16-19***

I've been fascinated by banyan trees ever since I saw my first one nearly 25 years ago on our honeymoon. The old snapshots Scott and I took of each other embraced within its mighty branches are some of my very favorites. Our faces radiated our love for each other while the tree wrapped a special blessing around our marriage.

I tucked close against its enormous trunk and delighted in the way its leafy roof completely sheltered me with cool comfort. I especially adored the Lahaina Banyan Tree's aerial roots. Like giant fingers grasping handfuls of earth, they added strength to its structure, no matter which direction it traveled and stretched outward.

Later we ordered a watercolor print of that very same banyan tree to enjoy in our first home. When we relocated to South Florida ten years ago I was thrilled to see "our special tree" growing everywhere. Again I hung the print on our home's wall with a feeling of hope for the life we were building in our new community.

Just before the second round of hurricanes began rolling in that first stormy summer, I took our dogs for one last exercise break. We walked in circles around the smaller banyans in our neighborhood park while I touched each one with my hands, praying for God's protection for them and for our family during the impending night.

As soon as it was safe to do so, we ventured to the park as a family to check on "our" banyans. Some were spared and some were not. Many lay on their sides for several weeks. Touching the mighty roots and tendrils of the banyans, while at the same time feeling the leaves of their utmost branches, was sad, yet, extremely spiritual.

Happily, many of the toppled trees were later propped up with wooden braces. After seeing this, I began working with the image of becoming more "rooted and grounded." Later, I incorporated this scriptural phrasing into the tagline of my little writing company. Each day I try to envision myself working from a tiny Treehouse office encircled by mighty banyan branches, supported safely by my Father's hands.

Thank You, God, for the countless ways You support the height, breadth, length and deepest, darkest depths of my own unsteady faith with Your loving, mighty hands. Amen.

Robin Bradley Hansel