



The Willow Sisters

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Eternally Speaking Now

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Meet the Willow Sisters.

These two trees are **rooted and grounded** in the field across from our front porch. They **majestically adorn** the view with **stunning charm**, day after day. Through Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter, these two beauties faithfully provide a subtle sense of **peace and delight**, whether with branches dancing in the wind or leaves laden with snow.

I'm not the only one who thinks this, either.
These Sisters unassumingly **grab the attention** of many a house guest.
They've even **won** First Place and Best of Photography at the County Fair!

They just have a way of speaking into the soul,
and there's nothing else quite like them.



Before you conclude that I've gone off the deep end, don't worry-- I'm not worshipping trees. *Never*. Trees are created by God to bring Him glory, not the other way around. In fact, the Lord uses trees throughout Scripture to illustrate and symbolize a plethora of intriguing and powerful points. Aside from God and people, trees are the most mentioned word in the Bible. *(If you'd enjoy hearing more about that by the way, you are welcome to revisit [a previous blog, "I Tree, You Tree" here](#). Or you can listen to the [Podcast version here](#). It was a fun message to write.)*

When we enjoy any aspect of nature,
let us immediately consider God and how
creative,
enjoyable,
and glorious
He is.

Yes, *let nature lead us to worship the Lord*. He designed everything to point right back to Him. (Psalm 148) Creation reveals God's invisible attributes (Romans 1) and declares the glory of God (Psalm 19). Isaiah 55 poetically captures this reality and expresses it with precious personification.

***“For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace;
the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”
Isaiah 55:12***

Back to the Willow Sisters...

Several weeks ago, our family traveled out of town for two days. Hours after we'd left, we heard from multiple people about a **calamitous** windstorm that had passed through our County. Fairmount and all the surrounding towns were hit with **80mph** winds. Yes, you read that right: *80mph*. Electricity was out, and tree branches were **strewn** everywhere. During the days following, homes had no electricity, and many didn't receive power for a week.



Above: Until debris was removed, greenery littered every square foot within view. The damage was extensive.
Left: Tons of trees were uprooted, many having fallen into homes, crushing rooftops and windows.



Then things got even more personal.

While we were still away, after the **weather** had passed, a friend sent this picture (left), reporting that one of the willow trees had been **split** at the trunk.

Do you know how this made me feel?
I felt like a part of me had been split as well.

*I know it's just a tree, but **hang in there** with me.
The Lord brought **profound insights** from this,
and I believe He wants them shared with you.
He loves us, and He loves to use everyday things to
expose our hearts, woo us to Him, display His awesome character,
and set us free to do His will unrestrained.*

Upon returning home, I took my own picture of the injured willow tree. I stood at the same angle and distance from which I always photograph the Sisters. (Over time, I've found a favorite perspective for the willow photos, which has been helpful when working with the pictures later, like composing a collage or putting together a collection by theme.)

After snapping the shot, I paused to examine it and was amazed by an incredible discovery. Study the image below, and you'll notice something that **was hidden and is now revealed**:

There is now a little tree in view.

It's behind the **damaged** section of the front Willow.

It's been there all along, but it **wasn't visible** in the past because I've always taken a picture **from the same angle**, and **the willow's branches have blocked the concealed tree all these years.**



Look! Do you see that small, seemingly insignificant tree?
It was not in view before, **but now it is.**

Somehow through the storm (and it was a tumultuous upheaval), despite—in fact, *because of*—the wound to her trunk and the crushing of her limb, that Sister made way for a **different perspective**, a **new scene**, and a **fresh revelation**, **shedding light** on something that had been shrouded.

That **new thing** didn't present itself until *after* the turbulence had come through. It wasn't evident until *after* the sister had **endured, persevered**, and **hung on** through the 80mph winds, through the fears and unknowns that unexpected tempests of life can bring.

I observed something intriguing as we walked through town after the destruction.

Many of the **downed** trees and branches were **dry and brittle**.

You could clearly see that some had already been **dead** a while, even **diseased**.

The heavy gusts had simply served as a **tool** to get rid of **debris** that needed to be removed.

*I'm not minimizing the storm **damage**-- just acknowledging the parallel to our lives:*

Sometimes it takes a **divine disruption** to remove the dry, diseased, damaging, destructive debris that **hangs onto** our souls, weighing down and toxifying our thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Often we don't even realize the **junk** clinging to our minds and hearts until *after* the wild winds have roared, **exposing hidden things**. It may take some blowing around in order for our perspective to shift.

Through life's hardships,
instead of asking, "God, why did this happen *to* me?"
let us ask, "God, why did this happen *for* me?"
Along with that frame of mind will come the **ability to see** something
that once was hidden and is now in full view.



*"Like a rushing wind,
Jesus breathe within;
Lord, have Your way,
Lord have Your way
In me.*

*Like a mighty storm,
Stir within my soul;
Lord, have Your way,
Lord have Your way
in me.*

*I surrender,
I surrender,
I want to know You more,
I want to know You more."*

*Take a few minutes
to personally experience
this song, "I Surrender,"
via the tab below.*

[Click/Tap Here for the Song, "I Surrender"](#)

CHALLENGE

Glance at the picture to the left. This is a close-up of the Willow's ripped trunk.

Do you feel like this, sister?

Are you broken?
Do you feel irreparable?
What rips at your soul?
Have torrential winds wounded you?
Are you tired and weathered?

Take a closer look at your situation. Is there a **new discovery** to see? A **fresh outlook** to embrace?
Is there something in view now that wasn't seen before? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you.

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3

There's something I can say about the Willow Sisters that is consistent, no matter what. It's what they do when the wind blows: *they move with it.*

Faithfully and obediently, every single time the wind blows, whether gently or strongly, their branches yield to the breath of God.

Will you, sister, yield to the Lord and rest in Him? Will you surrender afresh to the powerful, mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Permit Him to freely **prune, cleanse, and revive** you. *Then lift up your eyes.* Look around and **welcome His new perspective**.

Then look around again.
Do you see all your sisters in Christ?

You are surrounded by sisters: **loyal, caring, devoted**. Some have been there all along, but you couldn't see them before the trial. **Reach out, stay connected, ask for help, call for prayer**. Yes, the **chaos** of life may have left you with a few scars, but *you are not alone*.

To conclude, I couldn't resist researching the meaning of the word *willow*. Here it is below, with key words highlighted. **Please don't miss this.**



Willow:

- 1) a **tree** or shrub of **temperate** climates that typically has narrow leaves, bears **catkins**, and **grows near water**. Its **pliant branches** yield **osiers** for **basketry**, and its wood has **various uses**.
- 2) a machine with **revolving spikes** **used for cleaning** cotton, wool, or other **fibers**.
- 3) The person's name, *Willow*, means '**Freedom**'

For those of you who study nature, you likely know what catkins are. For everyone else (including myself), I had to look up its definition. Are you ready? It means "wind-pollinated." Are you catching this? *Wind-pollinated!*

Allow me to impart to you a message of exhortation, a sort of summary for the above:

Dear Willow Sister, God created you to live by His Spirit, **temperate and self-controlled**, planted and growing in the **Living Waters of Jesus**. When the winds of life blow, stay **pliable**, and let the Holy Spirit use those **winds to scatter His seed** through you to others. He will use the winds to pollinate-- to multiply Himself through you! Walk in **freedom from sin** and in the **freedom to obey His Word**. He will use you to **carry provisions** to others, to **deliver His cleansing Word** to others, and to teach and exemplify to others how to be **clothed in Christ**.

Amen.

***"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.
For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,
which spreads out its roots by the river,
and will not fear when heat comes;
but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought,
nor will cease from yielding fruit."
Jeremiah 17:7-8***

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