

Visio Divina | Trees

[ONSCREEN: Text of poem scrolling onscreen – either over b-roll of trees or blurred facilitator?]

See how the trees
Reach up and outward
As if their entire existence
Were an elegant gesture of prayer.
See how they welcome the breath of spirit,
In all its visible and invisible forms.
See how the roots reach downward and out,
Embracing the physical,
The body and bones
Of its soul of earth and stone,
Allowing half its life to be sheltered
In the most quiet and secret places.

Oh, if I could be more like a tree on this Sunday
morning,

To feel the breath of invisible spirit
Touch me as tenderly as a kiss on the forehead.
If I could courageously and confidently
Dig down into the dark
Where the ground water runs deep,
Where shelter and sanctuary
Can be had and held.

Ah, to be like a tree
With all its bent and unbent places,
A whole and holy thing
From its topmost twigs
To the deepest taproot
To all the good and graceful
Spaces between.

- *To Be Like A Tree, by Carrie Newcomer*

How often do you stop and notice a tree? If your busy daily life is anything like most, probably not that often – unless the tree happens to be in your way! I mean, in one sense, trees are extremely common, so what’s so special to notice there anyway, right? But have you ever stopped and considered a tree, deeply? To drink it in. To think about the wonder in creation that it is. Maybe that sounds way too weird to you! And yet there is an ancient spiritual practice known as Visio Divina, which posits that we can *deeply* encounter God simply *by looking at the world differently*, by learning to see the holy in everything around us. It’s a form of mindful contemplation.

We often talk about listening for God. And our “finding” of him is often centered in words; prayed, sung or spoken. What happens if we take words away? What if we tried instead, for a change, to savor and encounter God with our eyes? What if instead of listening for God, we looked for God?

So right now, we’re gonna practice slowing down, to see more deeply. We have some images of trees we’re going to put up on the screen, and just allow you to mindfully contemplate whatever they stir.

To be clear here, the goal is not to come up with an answer, an application, to arrive at some specific conclusion. The goal is to simply be present to the moment, allowing yourself to be impacted... stirred. We want our posture to be one of receiving, not “doing.”

So look slowly, and deeply, try to take it in like you’ve never seen a tree before...! Look for a long time before you start letting your mind wonder and wander into meaning. That’s the best way to practice Visio. And then simply pay attention to whatever God stirs in your soul, as a result. So. Let’s look together now.

[AUDIO: Change Background Track]

[Choose 5 of the Tree photos to Visio for 30 seconds each]

FINAL SHOT ONSCREEN:

Black Screen, White Text:

**“You’re a tree replanted in Eden,
bearing fresh fruit every month,
Never dropping a leaf,
always in blossom.”**

- Psalm 1:3

[Then straight into song: How He Loves]