

Legend of the Dogwood

Through the windows of my office, I can see spring flowering in all its glory. The cherry trees in the median along Keith Street have transitioned from deep pink blooms to tender green leaves. In yards here and there, heads of tulips, alternately reddish-orange and yellow, are bobbing in a gentle breeze. Yellow, purple and orange pansies gather around them.



The dogwood trees – ah, the dogwoods – all along the Corporate Plaza, started with tiny buds encrusting crooked limbs that have now burst forth into shimmering white robes of petals commanding the attention of all who pass by.

The scene reminds me – especially now at Easter – of the legend of the dogwood. I have heard it and read it since I was a boy. The story is not found in the Bible, and I have never

seen any proof that it is true. People who visit the Holy Land, however, discover that the legend is told there much the same as it is here in the United States. At this Easter season, it is worth sharing again.

It is said that at the time of the crucifixion of Christ, the dogwood was a very large tree, big as an oak. The dogwood was so even-textured, firm and strong that it was chosen as the timber for the cross. To be used thusly for such a cruel purpose greatly distressed the tree. Jesus sensed this. Remember, He is the Lord of creation.

He who noted the sparrow's fall, whose last compassion was for a repentant thief, similarly forgave the regretful dogwood tree for its unfortunate fate. As He was nailed upon it, He perceived the painful remorse of the tree. In gentle pity for all the sorrow and suffering of every living thing, He said to the tree, "Because of your share of my suffering, never again shall the dogwood tree grow large enough and strong enough to be put to such a purpose as this."

He said, "Henceforth, the dogwood shall be slender and bent and twisted so that it might forever remain unmolested by the tools of cruel men. And the blossoms shall be in the form of a cross – two long petals and two short. And in the center of each petal, there shall be nail prints, brown with rust and stained with red. And in the center of each flower will be a crown – of thorns. And all who pass and see the dogwood tree will remember Me."

(more)

That's the legend, beautiful as it is. And although the dogwood tree is celebrated in the story, the theme is most definitely the compassion of Jesus Christ. His grace and His mercy are at the heart of the legend.

So, whether the legend is true, or whether God created the dogwood tree as it is to commemorate the love of His son for all mankind, and the blood-spilling, redemptive act of the cross, the effect is the same – the adoration of Jesus Christ.

It is particularly appropriate, then, at Easter and every day of the year, as the legend urges, that we remember Him and His sacrifice for us all. Jesus' resurrection – overcoming death and the grave – assures us that we, too, can have eternal life through faith in Him.

And that's something to *really* celebrate!

– Beecher Hunter