

Holy Tree!

Last week's storm has continued to be the topic of discussion for many of the residents of our community. In addition to some of the minor damage reported last week, it turned out that the large common grounds area which covers a couple of acres suffered some rather significant tree damage. It has taken a solid week to remove all the debris and broken limbs from that area.

I didn't know it at the time, but Marlene and I suffered a most interesting loss. Our entry doorway on the side of our house opens onto a side deck that measures about 10 ½ x 10 feet. Growing right out of the deck on one side is a large maple tree about 24-26 inches in diameter.



The top of that tree has provided protection for us since we moved here in the form of shade from the sun and protection from the rain. This storm took one of the primary branches that stretched from about 15 feet about the ground to the top of the tree and twisted it like a toothpick. It lay over several remaining branches, held onto the trunk by perhaps two inches. Today, six days after the storm, it was cut off and removed. In its present shape, what happened to this tree will forever change our experience of living here at Lakes Estates.

Whereas for the past ten plus years, when we walked onto the deck from the side door, we were sheltered by this tree, now when we walk outside, there is the biggest barren spot you EVER saw in a standing tree, and it is right above our heads! Here's a couple of pics of "what was" and "what is."



BEFORE

AFTER!!

From now on, when it rains, we'll be good and wet the moment we step outside, long before we ever get off the deck! My first response was great disappointment. I will miss the shade this branch afforded. I will miss the beauty of a full tree.

Then a few hours later, a thought occurred to me. I remembered that sometimes when God wants to speak to someone He makes what Scripture refers to as an "open heaven." He gets everything out of the way between Himself in heaven and the person He is going to speak to. I found myself asking Him "Father, would you carve away more places in my life and come down and visit me?"

I don't know about you, but I desire to have nothing between Him and me. I desire an open heaven in my spiritual life between the Lord and me. If it took a storm of this magnitude to awaken me to this desire, praise Him for it!

Even in writing this, I am aware that every "accident," every "storm" that affects us in the natural can be reacted to in a completely natural way. One can also ask the Lord to speak to him or her through the event. I've done that just now, and I've made a new decision.

I'm going to use the new look of my tree to pray! Every time I walk out the door, I'm going to ask Him to open heaven between Him and me..... "Lord, thank you for making a portal in this tree whose leaves and branches made a shadow between you and me. Thank you, Father, for open heavens! Speak to me, Lord! Your handmaiden listens!" Just now, another summer "thunder-dunder" just rolled by. I looked out through the doorway to the deck. The only place that got wet with rain was the "open heavens" space. The leaves sheltered virtually the whole deck except there!

Just in case you'd like to chew on a couple of examples of an open heaven in Scripture, try these on for size:

Exekiel 1:1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the **heavens** were **opened** and I saw visions of God.

Psaln 78:23 Yet he (God) gave a command to the skies above and **opened** the doors of the **heavens**;

Luke 3:21b-22 And as he (Jesus) was praying, **heaven** was **opened** and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

John 1:51 He (Jesus) then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see **heaven open**, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Finally, might we all realize that regardless of the storm, this too shall pass. Here is a photo of the sunset last week after the storm had gone on by.

