

Shortly after the heavy, fierce rain storm that recently went through our neighborhood knocking down trees and power lines, I was walking my dog by the local fire station. The streets everywhere were filled with debris yet I was surprised to see a huge mess of fallen branches and limbs right next to the Fire House. Wait, trees by the Fire house? Honestly, for all the years I've walked the road, I saw the trees but didn't see them. Now, after the storm? The ravaged mess of two trees, a poor massive pine and a maple tree commanded all attention. Huge sections of their centers had been ripped apart exposing massive trunk damage to both of them. What an enormous cracking and ripping noise must have been heard. As I looked I literally felt deep pain in my heart. I burst into tears. I could feel their hurt, such raw exposure. As I stared at the trees, amid my tears, there was a very unexpected gift too. I saw the trees, in a new way, for all their glory. They still stood. Bravely and majestically they stood so tall. The world around us is all alive ... we just can't hear what all of what we see has to say. I realized yet again, to just be open. One never knows when the unexpected will happen. It takes patience and courage to listen to what the maker of all says. For decades those trees had grown side by side, doing their thing. Now their limbs and branches were a tangled mess on the ground, no longer providing shade, exposing things that really were better hidden. I guess in a way, it's how we humans are too. Sometimes things happen to us...that strip us of all we once thought we were. Our strengths. Our own majestic stuff. We lose loved ones. Jobs. Health. Money. Youth. Social standing. So we need to seek, who we are, we ask God, so what now? Is our "wood" high enough quality that what has fallen can be fashioned into say a functional piece of furniture or piece of art? Is there anything left of me that can add lovingly and positively to the beauty of creation? Can we hope to heat someone's home as the firewood may? How can we help another with their needs? Are we strong enough in what remains that we still stretch to the sun and sky. Dare we hope that we can be a nice stump like in the children's book by Shel Silverstein, The Giving Tree, where we can provide a nice place for someone to sit and rest. How can we become a place of comfort to listen to another?

A friend who saw the trees said that a broken tree is reminiscent of a broken world. In many ways our world is broken, but we're all broken too, somehow we muddle on through in our brokenness. God is always there. Just as looking at the mangled tangled mess of limbs, the love and clarity of God shined through, we will see the light and know how to muddle. Listen to your heart.

The job of clearing away the trees is taking a few days for sure. Today, a nice stump remained of the maple. I hope they leave it for us to sit and rest. I hope they plant a couple of trees that will guard the neighborhood as the trees before them did.