



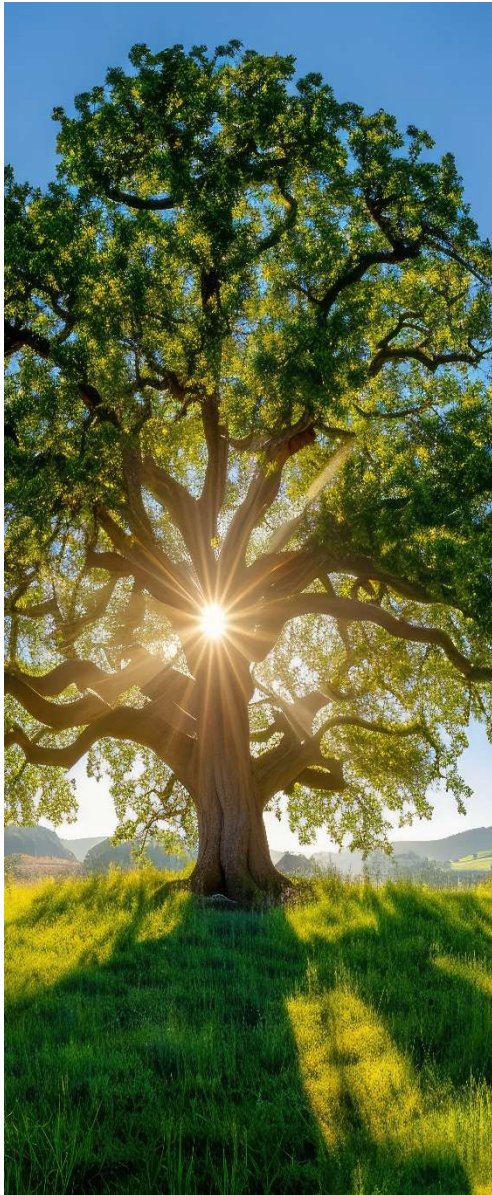
THE CROSS and CROWN

“No Cross, No Crown”

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Have you ever eaten an acorn? I only recently learned that they're actually edible! They're not really meant for human consumption, though. It takes several days, through a complicated process, to remove all of the toxins from acorns, and the only reward is a bitter tasting side dish.



In Isaiah 61 (the chapter from which Jesus read in the temple), the prophet writes that those whom the Lord delivers will be called oaks of righteousness. I have to think that, if God had wanted to use a fruit to represent righteousness, he would have chosen something other than an oak tree's acorns. After all, elsewhere in Scripture, he uses fig trees and grape vines in his examples. I think the righteousness that God is speaking of relates to the other thing that oak trees produce: oxygen.

When we breathe, we absorb oxygen from the air and exhale carbon dioxide as waste. This sounds a lot like some people I know (and I'm sure you know some, too), who take what's good out of the things that they're given and give out toxicity in return! However nice or generous you may be to them, they respond with ingratitude, bitterness and complaints. Just as it is not the nature of the body to exhale oxygen into the world, it is not the nature of human beings to release righteousness back into the world.

Trees, by contrast, absorb the toxic carbon dioxide and give out oxygen. That's what God calls us to do! Being an oak of righteousness is not just about producing righteousness; God also calls us to absorb the unrighteousness that surrounds us. As God's agents, we should defuse anger, speak up for those who are being mistreated and decrease the level of hatred in the world around us. We must absorb the curse and respond with blessing.

The oaks of righteousness, Isaiah goes on to say, are, “a planting of the Lord, for the display of his splendor.” Wherever you are, God has planted you there with a purpose. Even if your situation is not be ideal, recognize that God has planted you there to show off his splendor.

Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. (Romans 12:14)

Thanks for Praying!

Seasons change, but our God remains the same! As we launch a new school year, please continue to pray with us for:





- our new and returning students, families and staff at Spring Garden Academy,
- God's provision in every area of ministry,
- wisdom, with a clear sense of where God's leading, and
- an outpouring of God's Spirit.



We're praying with you!

If you're on our mailing list*, you're on our prayer list! If there's anything specific that we can join with you in praying for, please let us know. (We will only publish your requests in this newsletter with your permission.)

We really do love hearing from you! Every message and phone call helps us keep going!

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* **Important:** If you'd rather not be on our mailing list, we won't be offended! Just call or write us, and we'll remove you. (We'll still keep you on our prayer list!)

If you'd rather receive this letter via e-mail, please let us know, or subscribe to it at crossandcrown.online/subscribe !

Did you know?

Tropical rainforests are often referred to as the lungs of the planet. They cover less than 7% of the earth's surface but produce up to 20% of our oxygen, all while consuming much of the world's pollution.

Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.
Let all creation rejoice before the Lord.

(Psalm 96:12,13)



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