

Super tree powers (Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1)

Trees symbolize a holy channel that faithfully stewards the power of God into the world.

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During the pandemic shutdown of 2020, my family found refuge in the stories of superpowers.

We committed to watching the Marvel superhero movies in order, starting with *Captain Marvel* and ending with *The Avengers: Endgame*. My personal favorites were the origin stories. Through upheaval and adventure, each hero gains a unique vocation to channel their relative power in service to others. No path is perfect; each hero draws upon the roots of their past and is stretched to meet the needs of people near and far.

In scripture, one superhero image of faith is a tree. In Psalm 1, a life fueled by God's Word is as fruitful, prosperous, and resilient as a tree planted by streams of water. In our reading from Jeremiah, a person who trusts in the power of the LORD is like a tree planted by water with roots growing deep into a steady source of hydration. This tree is not afraid when heat comes; its leaves remain alive. This tree is not anxious when a drought arrives; it remains fruitful.

Jesus is crucified on a tree, in the shape of the cross, becoming a symbol of God's choice to transform the power of our sin and death into new life. Revelation paints a picture of heaven in which the tree of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and its leaves are intended for the healing of the nations.

Trees symbolize a holy channel that faithfully stewards the power of God into the world. The image beckons us to grow deep roots in God's grace and stretch the limbs of our lives wide and far in love for our neighbor.

In the poem "When I am Among the Trees," Mary Oliver writes of the leaves in her midst that beckon her to stay awhile and remind her that "it's simple . . . you too have come / into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled / with light, and to shine." The light of Christ we celebrate this season pours into and through our daily thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Our faith makes us superheroes of God, sharing in the power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of reconciliation, healing, and new life. Like a tree, we are ever growing into this calling and channeling the power of God's love into our world.