**Canaan Union Church**

**314 Main Street**

# Canaan, Maine

**April 29-May 5, 2012**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**Sunday Morning Worship 10:15 AM**

**Pastor: Diana J. Perkins**

**Send your letters to: Canaan Union Church**

 **P. O. Box 1642**

 **Waterville, Maine 04903-1642**

**We always give thanks for the encouragement that we receive from our friends and family who read the bulletins. God bless.**

**Leroy and I both love trees. We both grew up with families who worked in the woods making their living by cutting trees. We appreciate the trees around our property and today we made a hard decision to have a tree cut down that has been a friend since we moved here several years ago. The big, old spruce tree had low hanging branches that children gravitated to for their playtime. It was a tent, a hideaway, a home for which I provided blankets, pots and pans and whatever else they needed to make the special tree their playmate. I have even provided baby dolls so the family could be complete. Children from our Sunday school have played there for hours. My grandchildren spread blankets under the branches and of course, picnic lunches were always in demand.**

**However, as the years have gone by, there is less and less evidence of life in the tree. Today just the very top is green and the dead branches have multiplied to the point where we can no longer justify keeping it. I have so many fond memories of trees over my lifetime. My first favorite trees were “Wolf River” apple trees located on my grandparent’s property. Uncle Rodney was my childhood hero and we spent a great deal of time entertaining each other. We would grab a couple salt shakers and head for the orchard. I couldn’t really climb trees very well and I always wore skirts and dresses, but that didn’t matter to Rodney. I was quite small so he would pick me up, hoist me onto his shoulders until I could reach a strong branch and then by grabbing onto other branches I could find a place to sit among the apples. Rodney would climb up and pick us a handful of green apples and we ate until we got sick of them or got sick on them whichever came first. As soon as Grammy Giles spied us with salt shakers, she would warn us that green apples can give stomach aches, but it was useless to give us the warning. We were hooked on green apples and we spent hours talking about our dreams and all the things we hoped to accomplish someday in life as we sat in the tree and munched on the sour fruit. Uncle Rodney was going to be famous someday; I just knew it. He had so many aspirations and among his heroes were Johnny Cash, John Wayne, Hop along Cassidy, the Lone Ranger, and then his all time favorite was Cassius Clay, the boxer. My parents didn’t appreciate television so I depended on Uncle Rodney to fill me in on these important people. He loved car racing too, but he was the hero for that. We used Grampa’s old discarded cars that were junked out down near the woods to hone our racing skills. Of course, Rodney always claimed to be the winner. He could imitate the motor sound much better than I could. His junker was always the top dog of the group. I didn’t care about that for I was just happy to have such a friend with a wonderful imagination. He made everything fun and exciting. He loved to mimic Cassius Clay and put in punches like he had seen on TV, but it wasn’t my cup of tea. My brother was a suitable boxing partner for him and I chose to stay on the sidelines cheering and clapping when one of them got pinned on the old mattress that was used for the boxing ring.**

**When my children were growing up, we had some trees that were their favorites too. The children helped me make a swing from rope and a seat of wood and they spent a lot of time pushing each other on that swing that was suspended from an oak tree branch. The neighbor boys built a tree house in the apple tree behind our house and they had their own little club for the children in the neighborhood to join. Friendships were made, memories were built and the summer months were enjoyed among the trees. There is nothing as special as a child’s imagination. Trees flourished as children climbed their branches, made plans for the future and ate the apples. When I watched my children head out the back door with salt shakers, I simply said, “Bring me a few of those green apples when you come in.” They did and we ate them together. They may have gotten a belly ache too, but a little tonic took care of the discomfit.**

**The trees are gone, the children are grown and life’s lessons are still being learned. The joys of childhood are filed under “precious memories” now, and they are sweet to recollect. Trees have provided shade from the hot sun, food for children looking for snacks, and a place for young children to try their skills at building a hideaway to get away from the problems of life.**

**Jesus taught many lessons using trees. Jesus, in John 1:43, was choosing his disciples. He said to Philip, “Follow me.” Philip found Nathaniel and told him that he had found the Messiah, the one that Moses and the prophets spoke about. Nathaniel went with him to see Jesus and Jesus said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” Nathaniel asked Jesus how He knew him. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Nathaniel exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” Jesus used this to cause Nathaniel to believe.**

**Jesus cursed the fig tree because it didn’t have any fruit on it. He used this tree as an illustration that people who have no evidence of spiritual fruit in their lives, will suffer for the lack of it.**

**He used the tree to illustrate the righteousness and holiness of God that fills a person who yields to the Spirit. The unfruitful tree is one that is controlled by the carnal nature and the deceit of Satan.**

**The tree was a symbol of the reconciliation between God and humanity. The cross was a symbol of the curse being broken so God and his people could have sweet fellowship. Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of good and evil thus bringing a curse to all of the world. The finished work of Jesus on the cross redeems us and brings us into a new relationship with God. We can overcome sin by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony. Someday we will enjoy the tree of life forever where the roses never fade.**

**Pastor Diana**