

Early this morning during the Fourth Watch an unusual thing happened; the story of the mesquite wood which I plan to use to make a high-boy dresser came to mind along with its application to our lives. Several individual friends stood out in my mind as the application developed: Carl, 60 years old, son of a Houston prostitute, rode hard and put up wet; Janna, an orphan, used and abused, who just lost her only son; Harry, back from doing several years hard labor for dealing. They are among “the called” that God has in His hands, working to bring out the luster of His reflection and His glory.

The story begins with a 5 foot by 8 inch piece of mesquite that has beautiful birds-eye grain. This will be made into several drawers that will be on the front to be seen and admired.

Now, this particular mesquite was over a hundred years old when a hurricane blew it down. Being 29” in diameter, it had to have been one of the very first mesquite seeds carried from Mexico during the late 1800s cattle drives. It preceded any road, nearly all houses, and had seen many a change in the area. Being old it needed to be harvested and made into its final purpose. It had stood out in the open, on the side of a road right-of-way, exposed to all sorts of abuse. Mowers had knocked off huge pieces of bark. The tree wept, and slowly began to heal itself, closing up the gaping hole. Winds had blown it so that it was bent over from time to time. Borers had invaded its inner cadmium, sucking the sap out and causing it to lose growth for a while. Its top had been blown off many times, causing it to form new branches and forks in the tree. (The forks are where the spectacular grain grows). Ground rot had come up from the bottom, causing more stress.

When I cut the tree down, violently with a chain saw, it essentially "died." I had the tree cut into planks of needed dimensions; some 2/4, some 4/4, some 5/4. Being rough cut, I had to plane it, cutting off the rough edges, sometimes two-three times. I then ripped it to be straight and square with a table saw. Then the rough edges were further smoothed with a joiner.

Yet, there was still more work to be done. I mortised the ends to fit with other boards of lesser beauty, but nonetheless strong and themselves too, chosen for their individual purpose. Once sawed, ripped, planed, joined, sawed, trimmed, mortised and put with their prettiest side out, all joined and fitted, I glued and screwed them together. Finally I put oil on them, allowing the first coat to soak for a while. The second, third and tenth coats were all sanded lightly at first, then less and less violently, while hand-rubbing brought out the variations in the light bands of the wood's grain.

It was the long, drawn-out periods of weathered stress that made the plank beautiful. Being bent horribly and repeatedly by the wind, caused the birds-eye grain to develop with an extraordinary and unique character. If it had stood with others receiving the support of the crowd, it would have grown tall and luxuriant, but it would have had straight, ordinary, and undifferentiated grain. Because of its lack of beauty, its purpose

would have been that of a hidden structural part, needed and useful, but unseen.
I recognized this potential when I saw the tree.

After all the initial stages of violence to it, the plank has stayed in a barn for seven years. There it has been kept dry and protected, waiting for a time to be put it to use for a purpose chosen by the carpenter.

This story has not been written for history's sake; instead, nearly every item, act and facet is a simile of someone's life. **We** are the Tree. The Most High sees our potential for a thing of beauty and purpose. Dare we allow Him to shape us?

Ben-Issachar

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