

Laying down your palm-leaves *By Jill A. Williams*

When it's got you, it's got you. You see something you deem foolish, or someone not using their common sense. A spicy remark springs forth in your mind- honestly, who would pass up this opportunity!?! The words leave your mouth and, as expected, everyone is laughing at the victim, leaving you indulging on your high. Someone must have pulled the blinds down in here...Introducing: "The Shade." #PalmTrees

Oh, the shade!

Of all the plants God so carefully crafted, the palm tree has been one that has fascinated humanity for centuries. When you think of Ancient Egypt or the rulers in Ancient Greece, those in royalty were always surrounded and fanned by these broad-leafed beauties. Fast-forward to today's culture of memes, Twitter threads and SnapChat-filters – palm trees mean something quite different. Not even fruit and vegetable emoji's have been spared (can we ever look at peaches in the same way again?) Together with the tea-cup emoji (popularised by Bernie the Frog), the palm tree has become synonymous with sassy lip-service and, at times, very derogatory statements.

Throwing shade = throwing stones

The Gospel reading for the 5th Sunday of Lent, John 8:1-11, speaks of the story of the woman caught in adultery. It always fascinates me how only the woman was up for stoning, despite the "it takes two" rule applying here (sips tea). She will forever be known as the 'adulterous woman' and not as the 'forgiven woman.' Jesus forgave her sins, and yet we still know and call her by it.

Isn't that what we do with each other? When kids give each other nicknames, don't they usually do so based on an embarrassing moment? (And don't we all chime in or add fuel to that fire? "Hey, there goes Becky-Buck-Tooth" or "Look, there goes Chicken-Legs..."). What is also fascinating is human nature in these situations. One's natural inclination is to laugh at such comments and add to them with even more degrading statements, turning the statement into a platform for collective bullying. Essentially, these 'rituals' turn into modern forms of the stoning which the woman in the Gospel was up for.

Bully-Beef

Bullying is an issue faced globally on various platforms, especially on social media. Most of us don't realise that we are part of or feed the bullying culture. Is it just me, or have we become more critical, judgmental and just plain-old mean to each other? Are we not validating this behaviour through our promotion of shady

comments, spilling tea on each other (sharing the latest 'news') and pulling out case-files (a.k.a. skeletons in the closet)?

Nobody is exempt from this. We all see the resentment and 'beef' that builds up between individuals, communities and nations based on it. We have all been on either ends of the issue. We all know how deep the wounds of bullying are, so why do we still see this happening in our society today?

The answer is simple: "*Hurting-people hurt people*" - Joyce Meyer

Moving right along

People don't like dwelling in their past. We tend to rush forth to 'next', as if that will allow us to escape all life's consequences. "Life goes on," but it really doesn't until you become honest with yourself and God, letting Him heal and change you.

Are you just going to sit back and watch as bitterness, envy and regret consume you daily? We were made to live; to grow, to learn, to love. The only way to stop being shady, is to try. (Shout out to all the pessimists out there who are probably side-eyeing this paragraph right now.) Yes! I said TRY. It won't always be perfect, but it will all be worth the effort in due time. Jesus never promised that we would never have to suffer, but he did promise to be with us and take us through our time of trial and testing (Revelation 3:10).

It's all in the mind

Are there levels to this? Can shade be ok? There are many situations and factors to consider, but one thing I know for sure is this: if love is not the source of the thought, and if the statement isn't for the building up of the person, or the tearing down of injustices, or strongholds in a certain space, then it might just be an unhealthy dose of shade.

God has made me very aware, lately, of my thought-life. I've noticed it is far from what it should be. Great men and women of faith advise strongly that one should take note of ones thoughts, as these affect one's speech and actions. That 'hilarious' dose of shade is not just 'a joke' or something 'they'll get over'... it's quite literally a matter of life and death. A snarky comment could be the last drop of poison needed to push someone 'over the edge' (pun intended). We all have a choice, so instead of choosing the 'death' of another, choose 'life' for your sake and theirs! (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)

The King is here!

On the day Jesus triumphantly entered the city of Jerusalem, riding a young colt (Luke 19:28-40), crowds spread out their cloaks on the colt and the road upon which it trod. Can you hear them singing "Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David!" Their

mouths became instruments of praise instead of cursing in this moment. Rays of light and hope in the darkness of doubt and fear.

Of all the metaphors and meanings behind this magnificent scene, I never before realised what this could mean for us today. When we take up our freshly picked palm branches on Palm Sunday, and metaphorically lay them down, (making a soft carpet of sorts for the King to enter the city and fulfil His life's purpose,) we also lay down our thoughts, words, actions and self-righteousness before the Righteous One. The One, who must enter our hearts to make us whole.