

Rooted and Rested

I was walking on the hill above our village in midwinter, with a deep frost persisting into the afternoon and making the thick mud rock hard. The blue sky was a bright backdrop to the Winter trees. As I admired the beautiful tracery of the black trees I saw Winter in a new light. The trees are leafless but not lifeless; they are dormant. For trees Winter is an essential time of rest.

I did some research into what trees do during the Winter. The ability of trees to use the Winter season to their advantage is amazing. During their dormancy they save energy, not making new food. Some deciduous trees even remove the nitrogen and carbon from their leaves before they shed them, storing them as proteins in the roots and inner bark to help fuel spring growth. **The lifespan of trees is increased if they are allowed a period of dormancy.** Dormancy is more than just a period of suspended animation, it is part survival and part preparation for the warmer days ahead.

For some species, such as the cherry, the cold is essential for the future growth of buds that survive into the Winter. They cover the buds with protective scales whilst dormant through the cold spell but need the cold to facilitate their opening. If the Winter is unusually warm, the buds won't burst until there is a chill.

The roots of the trees behave differently from the upper growth. They maintain a readiness to grow during the Winter if the conditions become temporarily favourable. This state is called **Winter quiescence—resting but ready.** It allows even deciduous trees to expand their root systems in search of water and nutrients in advance of Spring. Even whilst dormant, water is essential for the life of the tree and it will put out new roots during a dry Winter period. The word 'quiescence' has the same root as 'quiet' and the tree has the appearance of apparent inactivity but it is preparing, getting ready.

Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7

What a parable for us when we find ourselves in a waiting season: the need to save our energy, avoid spiritual dryness, and take every opportunity to establish our roots when the opportunities arise; yet being ready when the spiritual season changes. **Quiescence.**

My soul finds rest in God alone. Find rest, O my soul, in God alone. Psalm 62:1,5

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. Psalm 23:2-3a

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10a