

The Tree Farm

“What’s wrong with you?” I heard his question and stopped short, running shoes in hand. Racing thoughts. Uncried tears. Rampant fears. All was heat and confusion. I couldn’t answer yet. I had to get to the tree farm first. I had to be alone with you.

There, in the cool shelter of the woods, I walked for miles. I cried and I talked. I walked and I ran and I poured out my troubled thoughts. Gradually, the storm subsided. You spoke tenderly to me -- not at first in words, but through your gentle presence.

In the quiet, you opened my blind eyes. You showed me what is wrong. It is my desperate need of others. I take their love, and from it I try to fashion for myself a refuge. When someone withholds love from me, I have no refuge, and so I am afraid and angry.

Such was the drama of this morning. I saw his lapse in kindness as a threat to my safety, and my fears ran wild. But now you have calmed my heart, and you lead me to a refuge far deeper and safer than any other - the only *true* refuge.

You are my refuge, and I am safe again. Others will come and go and, though I will feel sadness and even grief at their leaving, yet in my deepest heart I will not be threatened. I make my home, my shelter, my refuge in you and you alone. Sweet relief.

In the afterglow of this truth, I met a man on my wooded path, and he said to me, “It’s nice to have a place to walk in the shade, isn’t it?” His words brought new tears, for I had indeed been walking all morning in your kind shade. Sheltered by your love. Hidden under the shadow of your wing.

What thanks shall I give for your tender compassion? You never belittle or condemn, even though we’ve been through this same scenario times without number. A bruised reed you will not break. You woo and you listen and you speak so softly. You heal. You free me from the desperate need of the other - free me to love, to give, to laugh.

Now I can see my brother in three dimensions. I can appreciate him and care for him. Before, he was thin, shrunken by my need of him. Now, instead of clamoring for his favor, I can ask, “What needs have you? What wounds do you carry? Come near, for now I will love you and revel in the loving.”

“O, taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!” 34:8.