

Rooted in God's Earth: Trees in Scripture



SESSION 7

**The Axe at the Root of the Tree
(Matthew 3.7-12)**

Monday 9 September 2024



God of creation, we thank you that we are rooted in your earth together. Help us to recognise and rejoice in the interconnectedness of all that has lived and all that will live. In our encounters with scripture, help us to listen for what your Spirit is saying, and inspire us with your love. Amen.

St John the Baptist the Forerunner,
Greek, tempera on panel, 19th
century (Victoria and Albert
Museum)



Matthew 3.7-12

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 'I baptize you with* water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with* the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'



Filippo Lippi, *The Adoration in the Forest*, 1459, oil on poplar wood with gold leaf, 118.5 x 129.5 cm (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)



Psalm 29

- ¹ Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- ² Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
worship the LORD in holy splendour.
- ³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over mighty waters.
- ⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.
- ⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
- ⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸ The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl,
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'

¹⁰ The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king for ever.

¹¹ May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!



Matthew 3.7-12

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