

## FAITH, FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND THE MARRIAGE TREE

By John F. Hall

In 2005, I planted a small Southern Magnolia tree. I called that tree, “The Marriage Tree.” I told my grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John, that when they married, I would like for them to come in front of “The Marriage Tree,” with their spouses, and let



me take their picture. What I have learned from living, these past 79 years, is that faith, family, and friends, are important, for me to live a meaningful and productive life. As a Christian writer of nonfiction life stories, I need three additional things. I need Christ's grace upon grace upon grace. I need His inspiration from scriptures. And I need the talent, which He has freely given to me. I believe that my faith in Jesus Christ is critical. Christ has truly blessed me, on the long and broken road, that I've been on, nearly all of my life. My favorite Bible verse is John, Chapter 3, Verse 16, with the words: “For God so

loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” In the stories that I have written, these past 47 years, I feel that some of my words have power because they echo Christ's Words as found in scripture. I'm more of a sinner, but I would like to be in that number, “When the Saints Go Marching In.”

One of my favorite Christian writers is Clay Harrison. He wrote a poem called, “A little Faith.” These are his words: “Sometimes the load is heavy that we are called upon to bear. That's when doubts and fear creep in with dark clouds everywhere. Temptations can overwhelm us when hope is nearly gone, but a little faith sustains us and keeps us hanging on. A little faith brings us comfort when we're down and nearly out. It gives us strength; it clears our mind as hope replaces doubt. A little faith will multiply a little more each day until those dark clouds disappear and the sun comes out to stay. A little faith is like an acorn, that can become a mighty thing, for answered prayers can let us soar like eagles on the wing. Faith clears away life's cobwebs and allows us to see the beauty of all creation God made for you and me.”

I started writing this story, a week before the Thanksgiving holiday. I hope to have all of the family, and most of the kin come in, from near and far. We moved the dinner feast to the Saturday after Thanksgiving. My oldest granddaughter, Andrea, and her husband, Andrew Jansen, will drive up from Springfield, Tennessee. My granddaughter, Heather, will drive over from Lexington, Kentucky. My grandson, John Andrew, will drive up from Clarksville, Tennessee. My step grandson, Cole, will drive over from Marshall County, Kentucky. My in-laws, Bruce and Brenda Oakley, will drive over from Murray, Kentucky. My next door in-laws, Roger and Marsha Garner, will walk the 30 plus feet, and come in at our deck door. My son, John, and my daughter-in law, Lori, will drive the six miles from Canton, Kentucky. My wife, Paula, has set the dinning room table with her special Thanksgiving dishes. One nice thing about our old Antebellum farm house, is that we have a large dinning room table that can accommodate all of us. Heather, since

she was a little girl, will always sit next to me, on my left side. I pray the grace for the meal, and I thank Christ for allowing us to share the feast.

I asked Christ for His blessing, and, for a safe return home for family and kin. In February of 2024, I suffered a compression fracture of my T12. The spinal pain was almost more than I could tolerate. I was not able to have it repaired until the first week in April. My oldest granddaughter, Andrea, married Andrew Jansen in March. I came to their wedding in a wheelchair. It seemed like things were really going south for me. I suffered additional compression fractures of my T-11, T-8, L-3 and L-4. I had the T-11 and T-8 fractures repaired in July. Dr. Jonathan Couch, made the repairs. Due to the condition of my L-4 and L-3, he felt that daily injections of FORTEO would help my body repair those fractures. Because I suffered congestive heart failure, kidney failure, and lung failure, in March of 2023, I could no longer get epidurals for my spinal stenosis pain in my L-5. The risk of a stroke, for being off blood thinner, was unacceptable. But, it is my sjogren's syndrome, and my rheumatoid arthritis, that just adds to my misery.

After a wonderful Thanksgiving meal, I asked. Andrea and Andrew to stand in front of "The Marriage Tree." Heather took pictures, and John-John held a wedding blessing picture. I would give it to Andrea and Andrew. During the ice storm of 2009, the



Magnolia tree split in half. I did not expect it to live. But Mother Nature had other plans, and the tree survived. I decided to say a prayer before I gave my wedding blessing. This is the prayer: "Jesus Christ said, for where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them. We are gathered in the name of Jesus and we ask our dear Lord to bless the marriage of Andrea and Andrew Jansen. We ask this in His name and for His sake. Amen." I asked Andrea and Andrew to hold hands, and I gave them my blessing with these words: "May you always be warmed by each other's smile. Always take time to walk and talk a while. Always know deep down you're each other's best friend, and enjoy the kind of love that grows

and has no end."

Joyce Kilmer wrote the poem, "Trees." These are her words: "I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree. A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed against the earth's sweet flowing breast; a tree that looks at God all day, and lifts her leafy arms to pray; a tree that may in Summer wear a nest of robins in her hair; upon whose bosom snow has lain; who intimately lives with rain. Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree." Linda C. Grazulis wrote the poem, "When Friendship Touches the Heart." These are her words: "I believe God sends friendships to brighten up our humdrum days, whether they be sunny-filled or cloud-filled skies of stormy gray! A loyal friend is honest and true and stands steadfastly by your side; it's someone who shares the bleakness - someone in whom you can confide! Friends offer a cup of warm coffee or tea and sharing a reassuring word when moods are blue; good friends refuse to offer a ton of advice - only if you wish them too! Friends love to laugh and chuckle while reminiscing over the present and the past; why, it seems the friendship is so real that perhaps a lifetime it will

last. Take time to praise God for companionship when friendly togetherness touches the heart; for almighty God is so good to - He'll send a faithful someone to share a part.”

John F. Hall

\*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>