

Sage Advice*

Go to the sagebrush, you fool! See its endurance and be wise

Genesis 1.11–12

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • March 24, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2024

Scripture Reader and Reading: Bryan Rich – Psalm 92.12–15

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – No Suggestions

Prelude:

I. When you think of something wonderful in nature, what comes to mind?

- A. Magnificent mountains?
- B. Beautiful beaches?
- C. Fine flowers?
- D. Awesome animals?
 - 1. Spectacular sagebrush?!
 - 2. Say what?

II. God created sagebrush,

11 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

– Genesis 1.11–12

- A. God had reasons for creating the sagebrush.
- B. If we can learn a little about the *sagebrush*,
 - 1. perhaps we can learn a little about *ourselves*, or
 - 2. what we should be.
 - a) In the Bible, the Holy Spirit frequently used images from nature
 - b) to teach us spiritual truths.
 - (1) Proverbs 6 even says we can learn from the lowly ant,

**6 Go to the ant, you sluggard!
Consider her ways and be wise.**

– Proverbs 6.6

(2) Likewise, go to the sagebrush, you fool!

(3) Consider its endurance and be wise!

III. Therefore, tonight, brethren, I would like to give you some “sage advice.”

Persuasion:

I. The Sagebrush

A. Sagebrush covers 470,000 square miles in 11 western states.

1. Wyoming has the most,
2. covering 50% of that state.
 - a) What other plant in America
 - b) can boast of such coverage!

B. It grows typically in the 4,000 to 7,000 foot elevation range

1. in arid conditions, but
2. where the soil is good.

C. With so much of it around,

1. God must like sagebrush and
2. we always do well
 - a) to like what God likes and
 - b) to learn from what God likes.

D. Several different shrubs we call sagebrush, but

1. the one we know the best is
2. tall sagebrush (common sagebrush, big sagebrush, blue/black sagebrush or mountain sagebrush).

II. Adaptability

A. The versatility, tolerance, and flexibility of sagebrush

1. goes beyond most other plants and trees.
2. It can endure
 - a) blistering heat,
 - b) freezing cold,
 - c) endless drought, and
 - d) overwhelming floods.

B. If there is not enough water and the soil is poor,

1. sagebrush grows smaller
2. instead of giving up and dying.

C. If there is enough water and the soil is good,

1. sagebrush will grow as much as 12 feet high,
2. looking more like a tree than a shrub.

D. As adaptable as the sagebrush is, God created us

1. with even more
2. versatility, tolerance, and flexibility.
 - a) Look where we can live and
 - b) where we can travel.
 - (1) We can live in
 - (a) hotter places,
 - (b) colder places,
 - (c) drier places, and
 - (d) wetter places.
 - (2) We can travel anywhere
 - (a) on the land,
 - (b) under the land,

- (c) under the water, and
- (d) in the sky and beyond.

c) We can do anything.

(1) Genesis 11 speaks of the God-created ability we have,

6 And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.”

– Genesis 11.6

(2) What have we not done yet?

- (a) If you can name it,
- (b) we will surely do it.

E. Yet, when it comes to

- 1. doing great spiritual things, or
- 2. obeying the commands of God,
 - a) we believe we cannot do it.
 - b) We sound like the ten spies,

(1) who believed they were just as grasshoppers

(2) in comparison to the giant of challenges facing them in the Land of Canaan.

F. Look at the adaptability of the sagebrush and then

- 1. listen to our complaining.
- 2. Have you truly listened to yourself?
 - a) For one day, listen to everything you say,
 - b) either orally or in your heart, and
 - (1) you might surprise yourself
 - (2) with your complaining and dissatisfaction.

- (a) Can't we do better than the sagebrush,
- (b) which neither disobeys God nor complains, but
 - i) just grows to the best of its ability?
 - ii) Try another day of self-listening to prod yourself to glorify God.

G. Numbers 13 repeats the words of Caleb,

- 1. one of two faithful spies,
- 2. who believed that if they were God's people,
 - a) they could do anything.
 - b) Should not this be our attitude?

30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

– Numbers 13.30

H. What good thing do you need to do in your life

- 1. that you believe you have not been able to do?
- 2. Do not let the sagebrush outdo you!

III. Gives Glory to Its Provider

A. One thing that I like about sagebrush country

- 1. is that you can see the earth.
- 2. If there are interesting
 - a) rock formations,
 - b) unusual valleys,
 - c) brilliantly colored land, or
 - d) something else,
 - (1) sagebrush does not hide it, but
 - (2) actually helps preserve it.

B. When you are deep in a beautiful forest,

1. it hides the earth,
2. which supports the forest.
 - a) What would Arches National Park in Utah be like,
 - b) if it was all covered in a Redwood forest?
 - (1) We could not stand in awe
 - (2) of the fantastic designs of the land.

C. Get into sagebrush country and the glories of the earth stand out.

D. Shall we show the world ourselves or Christ?

1. Paul wrote in Second Corinthians 4
 - a) that our emphasis cannot be us, but
 - b) someone else,

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

– 2 Corinthians 4.5

2. He had just written in the previous chapter
 - a) that the people of the world read us, but
 - b) they should be reading of Christ when they read us,

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? 2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

– 2 Corinthians 3.1–3

3. Matthew 5 records the words of our Teacher

- a) on how we ought to live,
- b) that we do not hide what we do,
 - (1) even as the sagebrush cannot hide, but
 - (2) we let something or someone else get the glory,

14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

– Matthew 5.14–16

- E. There are ways we can be like the Redwood, but there are ways we can be like the sagebrush.

IV. Pollination

- A. The unappealing sagebrush
 - 1. does not attract birds or insects for pollination.
 - 2. It depends upon the wind.
 - a) Without the wind,
 - b) sagebrush would be fruitless.
- B. In John 3, Jesus used wind
 - 1. to illustrate the Holy Spirit
 - 2. working in our lives.
 - a) You cannot see the wind pollinating sagebrush, but
 - b) you can see the effects.
 - (1) We cannot see the Holy Spirit working, but
 - (2) we should be able to see the effects.

8 “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is

everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

– John 3.8

C. Paul argued in Galatians 5,

1. that if we follow the lead of the Spirit,
2. it will be obvious by the things we produce in our lives,

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law... 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

– Galatians 5.18, 22–23

D. A mature sagebrush may produce one million seeds.

1. Yet, the seeds are so small
2. that you would need 2.5 million seeds to make one pound.
 - a) Although small, they are effective, growing all over the West.
 - b) Likewise, we do small things that we never notice, but
 - (1) someone notices, causing there to be Christians all over the planet.
 - (2) Both people and God see the little things we do.
3. You have planted a little seed of kindness
 - a) that someone needed at that moment, and
 - b) you did not think a thing of it.

42 “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”

– Matthew 10.42

34 “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you

blesed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’”

– Matthew 25.34–39

- (1) Greeting someone.
 - (2) Letting another go first.
 - (3) Being patient with a new checker, teller, waitress, will speak volumes.
 - (a) You forgot about it 60 seconds later, but
 - (b) that person did not forget.
- E. However, even as every sagebrush seed does not produce a plant,
1. so not everything we do bears fruit in a conversion or something else.
 2. However, the sagebrush seed can lay dormant for years, and
 - a) later with the right conditions it springs to life.
 - b) We plant seeds in people all the time,
 - (1) and later it shows up, such as
 - (2) the husband converted after years, perhaps decades, of watching his wife.
 - c) We plant seeds in ourselves, but
 - (1) we wonder at the time what good it did,
 - (2) until something happens later in life,
 - (a) then we see the benefit.
 - (b) Remember Joseph in Egypt.

- F. Remember that we are often like the tree of Psalm 92,
1. not producing some fruit until later in life.

**12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
 He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13 Those who are planted in the house of the LORD
 Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They shall still bear fruit in old age;
 They shall be fresh and flourishing,
15 To declare that the LORD is upright;
 He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.**

– Psalm 92.12–15

2. Sagebrush is like the palm tree,
 - a) flourishing when you do not expect it to.
 - b) You are like the sagebrush,
 - (1) flourishing when others and perhaps you did not expect to.
 - (2) Do not give up living and growing
 - (a) until like the sagebrush
 - (b) you give up your body to the earth.

Exhortation:

I. Do you what some “sage advice”?

- A. Go to the sagebrush, you fool!
- B. Consider its endurance and be wise!

II. Even as the sagebrush stays connected to its provider, the earth,

- A. make sure you stay connected to your heavenly Father
- B. through faithful obedience to His Son.

*The impetus for this sermon was, “Sage Advice,” *Creation Illustrated*, Fall 2006, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 12–18.