



The Three Trees
a retelling of a traditional story
by Alan M. Barker

Three small trees stood on the side of a hill.
Each reached upwards, wondering what they might become.

The first tree looked up into the night sky and saw stars shining like bright diamonds. It dreamt of being beautiful, saying to itself: 'I'd like to be a treasure chest holding precious jewels and decorated with gold and silver'.

The second tree felt the wind tug at its branches and longed to be strong. 'If I were a fine sailing ship' it thought. 'I'd sail the seas carrying powerful kings and princes to far off places'.

The third tree simply dreamed of growing graceful and tall. It wished to become the tallest tree in the world 'to make people look up to heaven and to think of God'.

The seasons passed and the trees grew.

Many winters later, three woodcutters climbed the hill.

One of them stopped beside the first tree. 'This is a lovely tree' he observed, as he set to work with his axe. 'Now I shall be a beautiful treasure chest' the first tree whispered as it fell to the ground.

The next woodcutter approached the second tree. 'This is a sturdy one', he remarked, 'just what I need'. The strength of the second tree was so great that it wasn't easily cut down. 'I shall now become the greatest of ships' it thought.

Meanwhile, the branches of the third tree trembled. It longed to stay on the hill and to grow even taller. But the third woodcutter hardly looked up as he drew out his axe. 'This one will do' he muttered. Soon the third tree crashed down to the ground, its dreams shattered.

The first tree was pleased to be taken to a carpenter's shop. But to its dismay, instead of being fashioned into a beautiful treasure chest, the tree was used to make a feeding rack for animals. Placed in a dark and dusty stable it was filled with hay. No shining jewels!

The second tree was taken to a small boat-yard. No sailing ships were constructed there, only fishing boats. Much to its disappointment it was taken to a small lake to be used by a fishing family.

The third tree was shocked when it was cut into strong beams and left in the corner of a wood yard. 'What will become of me?' it wondered sadly. 'I so wanted to be the tallest tree in the world to point people to God'.

Time went by. The three trees had nearly forgotten their dreams. But one night, as the first tree was bathed in silvery moonlight, a young woman gently laid her new-born baby in the manger. 'If we were at home, he could have slept in a proper cradle' said her husband, a carpenter. The mother smiled as she watched her sleeping child and sang a lullaby. 'He's beautiful' she replied. The first tree suddenly felt proud. It was holding the most precious treasure in all the world!

At the end of a long day a tired traveller and his friends wished to journey across the small lake. All was calm as the fishing boat set out and the traveller soon fell asleep. He slept deeply whilst the sky filled with dark clouds and a fierce wind began to blow. Soon, waves threatened to flood the boat. The second tree trembled. It wasn't strong enough reach the safety of the shore. The terrified passengers woke the sleeping man. He stood up, and in a loud voice commanded the wind and the waves to be still. Immediately the wind dropped to a gentle breeze and the waves stopped. The second tree was amazed. It realised that the traveller was the Lord of all creation, whose word was peace.

One Friday morning, the third tree was shocked when its beams were pulled from the half-hidden wood pile. It shuddered as it was split by rough nails. It felt horrified to be carried to a place of execution. It was ashamed as people came to watch and jeer a man being put to death. The sky turned dark as night. The following day all was silent and still.

But on Sunday the sun rose and world was filled with light! Birds began to sing and the third tree was filled with joy. God's love had changed everything! The first tree had become beautiful. The second tree had been made strong. And now every time people thought of the third tree they would think of God's forgiveness and be pointed to heaven.

That was far more important than being the tallest tree in the world!