

Buried Deep

By Randal Stephens

It was just another day at the park for Max and Aly. But that day, she would cross the playground into the wooded area where pecans littered the ground, fallen from the great trees overhead.

“What are these, daddy?”

“They’re pecans. You break open the shell and you can eat them.”

“Let’s eat ‘em,” she said.

“Well, these are probably old, not good for eating. But they’re seeds too,” he told her. “You can’t eat them but occasionally, they’ll sink back into the ground. Then another tree grows.

“Let’s plant ‘em then.” Her eagerness probably came from the success they’d had with the little pinto bean.

“Maybe next time,” he told her. But her hands were already full.

The moment they were home, she was out of the car, digging a hole in the dirt with her little fingers. He looked down at the pecans lying on the ground. They were seven of the worst nuts he’d ever seen; small, cracked, full of holes. But she didn’t care. A few minutes later, they were planted deep, crowded into the same hole.

A few months later, against his every expectation, a small, leafy growth appeared, the beginnings of a new tree.

The thought of that sapling stayed with him throughout the day. He marveled how life could emerge from one of those useless nuts. The answer came to him as he read the Bible the next morning. In the passage, Jesus was speaking of His own death and said, “...unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”¹

In his farsighted view of the world, Max had underestimated the importance of the simple task of planting the seed. Once the seed is planted in that rich, enveloping soil, the seed is changed.

But first, it must die. When it dies, it can be changed. When it is changed, it can grow. And in a few years, when it is strong, when it has endured the elements, when its roots have dug deep into the ground, it will begin to produce fruit of its own; fruit, and seeds.

I’m the nut, he thought.

In that moment, Max realized his most dire need: to be buried in God’s rich, enveloping soil. He’d been a seed far too long. It was time for him to carve out a hole and be buried, because he wanted to be changed. Forever.

¹ John 12:24 (NIV)