

Dear Friends,

As we turn towards September, and a time of harvest festivals, it is the season for apples. We can get apples all year round in the supermarket but if there is an apple tree in the garden it is about this time of year that its fruit begins to ripen, and the apples are picked.

There is a song, not a modern one by any stretch of the imagination, but a song called 'Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me.' This song began life as a 19th century English folk song called 'long, long ago,' before being updated by Sam Stept in its melody. Lew Brown and Charles Tobias wrote the lyrics for the song's introduction in the 1939 Broadway musical, *Yokel Boy*. There have been many versions of this song recorded since, and in the early 1970's it became one of the few songs that had three different versions in the hit parade at the same time.¹

We all have times where we want to be able to sit alongside someone else, whether under an apple tree or not. It could be outside enjoying each other's company or in companionable silence. It may be inside tucked up in front of an open fire watching TV with family or friends. We may have a sense of who we would want to be with in whatever setting - which could, of course, include an apple tree!

Imagine if it was Jesus who said to you, 'don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me.' How would that make you feel? There are plenty of examples in the Bible where we see Jesus come alongside others, not least on the walk to Emmaus with the two disciples. Whilst there wasn't an apple tree in sight (or at least it's not mentioned), we know that Jesus is there longing to have a conversation with us and to be at the centre of all that we do and share with others. On that walk to Emmaus the disciples were downcast at all that had been happening. Jesus drew out of them the issues they faced and then came alongside them. By the end of the conversation their distress had turned to joy because their relationship with Jesus had deepened so much, and they recognised him as the Messiah. Jesus offers that same invitation to each of us today. At times they were walking and at other times they sat together and shared a meal. For Jesus, it doesn't matter whether we're sitting under an apple tree or not, he is there wherever we are.

Let us remember that Jesus is with us, a presence in our lives and the one to whom we can turn whatever our circumstances. The weather may, or may not, allow us to sit under an apple tree but we don't have to wait for the weather. We can turn to Jesus, sit, walk, run or travel in whatever way we like. In it all, Jesus longs to be the centre of our lives so that 'we don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but him.'

God bless,
Chris

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don%27t_Sit_Under_the_Apple_Tree_\(with_Anyone_Else_but_Me\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don%27t_Sit_Under_the_Apple_Tree_(with_Anyone_Else_but_Me))
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