

Autumn approaches

Outside my window, I can see the signs of autumn approaching and as I watch the seasons change I am reminded how grateful I am to live in a part of the world where the changing seasons are obvious. In the natural world around me, I see the vibrant growth of summer slowing down. The mornings and evenings feel noticeably chillier, berries and nuts are showing in some of the hedgerows. In my garden, the rhubarb is beginning to wilt, fungi are appearing in odd corners, some of the trees are just beginning to shed their leaves, the squirrels are burying nuts and seeds all over the lawn and fighting for the best winter territory.

I always watch the changing of the season from summer to autumn with mixed feelings. I love the natural autumn bounty of fruit and berries and nuts and fungi. I love watching the leaves changing colour, and scuffling through dry, fallen leaves, feeling like a child again. Seeing the children in our schools remember harvest is always particularly special. But although on the whole I enjoy winter, I don't welcome the onset of colder weather and longer nights. I like the comparative stillness of winter, but each year I still feel a momentary sadness at the passing of the 'busyness' of spring and summer.

However, what I appreciate most about the changing seasons is that they are a reminder for me of the cycle of life, and my own mortality. As I watch summer turn to autumn, knowing that winter will follow, and then spring, I find it immensely comforting to be reminded that when the seasons of my life turn from autumn to winter, and finally to death, there will be spring for other lives. It gives me a sense of being connected to the heartbeat of life on earth, which helps to give my life focus and meaning.

Modern, western culture often seems to value the spring and summer of our lifetimes more than the autumn and winter but the Bible is not like that. On the whole, the Bible speaks of a culture where the elderly were respected for their wisdom and experience, and were seen as the natural leaders of communities, able to resolve conflicts and set wise priorities for the people. In the New Testament, we are told of Jesus' condemnation of a religious practice that had arisen, where people were permitted to neglect the needs of elderly parents, if the money was given for religious purposes instead. Jesus said that to neglect parents in this way was to serve tradition rather than God.

So my prayer for us all this month is that we would cherish the changing seasons in the natural world around us, and would cherish the seasons in our own lives too, and in the lives of others.

Yours in Christ,
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