

June 2023: Weeds or flowers?

Some years ago now, I was invited to a conference in Barbados and was somewhat amused to notice that the uncultivated garden beds around the small hotel where I stayed all looked rather like the house plant section from any garden centre. And needless to say, the hotel owner was also amused that we kept 'weeds' in our houses and thought them rather special.

Every spring, I find it pure joy to see our lawn become awash with a sea of bright yellow dandelions. I think their brightness and exotic beauty easily outshines any of the more expensive flowers we go to great lengths to cultivate. And a bonus is that our lawn also hums and hovers with numerous species of bees, and butterflies too if we're lucky, all bringing their own delight. I was pleased to note that this year the Royal Horticultural Society has changed its advice to gardeners, in the light of our climate and biodiversity crises. The RHS no longer promotes a 'good' garden as one that is carefully manicured, but one that has healthy soils and supports a healthy ecosystem, helping protect our planet for the future. And a third of gardens at this year's Chelsea Flower Show feature what are being described as 'resilient plants' or 'plant heroes,' that enable a thriving habitat.

Many of us will have heard the expression that 'a weed is just a flower in the wrong place.' This expression could not be further from the truth, the Royal Horticultural Society tells us. Our wild plants are exactly where they are needed, repairing damaged soils, and recycling plant nutrients. They play a vital role in feeding and protecting the soil that less hardy plants depend on, and in supporting pollinators and other insects, that we all depend on. They are, quite simply, the unsung heroes that enrich and support everything else, and we should celebrate and treasure them.

Apart from the simple lesson of looking closely and celebrating the wonderful diversity and harmony that God has created, I think there is a lesson for us about how we relate to one another too. I encourage you to reflect on those you know, or have known. Where have you seen those who are perhaps generally undervalued, playing essential roles in bringing out the best in others, or in playing a vital part in community?

My prayer for us all, is that our eyes might be opened to appreciate all around us, people and nature. And that we might be freed from the sin of seeking to impose our own will on all around us, so that we can work together to build the thriving communities that are God's will,.

Yours in Christ,
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