

From the Pastor's Study

Rev. G. Lubbers

SPRING-TIME

“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell...”

Solomon's Song 2:11-13

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted! Thus spoke the Preacher who had gotten more wisdom than all who had been before him in Jerusalem, and who set in order many Proverbs...

Did not God, who created the universe and all the things contained therein, make lights in the firmament of the heaven? Were they not to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the day from the night? And were they not to be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years? And in His remembrance of His mercy to Noah, smelling the sweet savor from the altar, did God not ordain and promise that while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease?

Truly among the seasons of the year there is none so ardently looked for as the spring-time. What a sigh of relief when we finally say to each other: lo, the winter is past! It seems that all of God's animate creatures wait with uplifted head for the passing of winter's icy blasts, and for the arrival of the balmy winds, blowing from the southland. With the arrival of the warmer south winds and clashing with the northern cold, even nature has its convulsions in tornado and storm. The hardy robin, the harbinger of spring, is ever a welcome sight to old and young. With the arrival of this red-breast we know that the time of the singing of birds is come, and that the voice of the turtle is in the land...

There is an incomparable freshness in the season of spring; all is in virgin green. And all the plant-world of grass and flowers, reeds and rushes pulsates with life, and bursts forth in the new life of leaf, buds, and flowers with nectar for the bees to garner. On yon mountain-side, close to the melting snows we see the hardy mountain flowers bloom, and far below near rushing stream and meandering brook is the purple violet and the lily, more fair than Solomon's clothing. And across plains and desert land we see the blossomed cactus and the lowly dandelion. Each has its garment from God and of them it is written: they toil not, neither do they spin.

If God so clothe the grass of the field and the lily, o, ye, of little faith...

The early rains have come and gone. The dark and lowering sky is seen in the west. The thunder rumbled in the distant night, and the entire sky was all aglow in myriads of degrees of lightning; clouds and mountain-top meet in the sheen of light, and under the dark clouds can be seen the white rain as dispensed from them on hill and plain. Day breaks upon the earth, and through the rain can be seen the bow of God arched upon the cloud. And once more the sun shines upon teeming verdure.

Yes, the rain is over and gone!

One hears the singing of the birds, singing never so sweetly.

Truly there is a time for everything under the sun...

Here the eye, the ear and the nostrils of man can feast. The vine and the grape give a good smell. There is even a smell of earth which satisfies the heart of man. And man goeth forth to his labors till the evening. "The plowman slowly homeward wends his way..."

And all these things happen in parable!

For spring-time is the time of youths dreaming. It is the time of planning. It is seed-time to be followed by harvest. It is the time too of youth's preparation for life. It is really a picture, for the Christian, of all our present life we now see the sower go forth and sow, as did our Lord teach in the well-known parable. It is all so brief and is preparation for the eternal harvest.

Yes, the fig tree putteth forth green figs ere its leaves appear; when its branch is yet tender, saith Jesus, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is night. All of God's works in spring-time speak of things to come in summer and fall.

And all things cry; the Bridegroom cometh!

And the church responds in faith and hope: Arise my love, my fair one and come away.

All things cry loudly: Maranatha, Jesus comes. Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. For us who believe such is the speech of every sunrise and sunset, of every cooing of the turtle in the land, of the song of the nightingale, the flower of the dogwood and the sweet scent of the lilac, the beautiful rose of Sharon. For Christ is the Lily of the valley, the bright and morning-star. Surely, all things are subjected to vanity; spring-time is so brief. The grass withers, the flower fadeth... But we look for the eternal youth of eternal life in Christ. And all things look with earnest expectation for the redemption of the children of God, and for the glory to be revealed in the saints.

Then shall the righteous say: As an apple tree among the trees of the word, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste...

He feedeth among the lilies.

The winter is past, and spring-time has come...everlastingly!

That of so vast and innumerable a multitude of blossoms that appear on a tree, so few come to ripe fruit, and that so few of so vast a multitude of seeds as are yearly produced, so few come to be a plant, and that there is so great a waste of the seed of both plants and animals, but one in a great multitude ever bringing forth anything, seem to me lively types how few are saved out of the mass of mankind, and particularly how few are sincere of professing Christians, that never wither away but endure to the end, and how of the many that are called few are chosen.

Jonathan Edwards

Originally Published in:
Vol 25 No 3 May 1965