

Spiritual Rhythm

Spring: A Fresh Encounter with God

Isaiah 35

Online Sermon:

http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

Praise be to God; winter does not last forever! In the depths of sorrow and pain that threatens to crush any remembrance of pleasurable times, one finds that the Man of all Seasons, Jesus, “waits with us, prunes us, and breaks our self-dependency” (39). He who raises the dead lets His glorious light shine into our lives we might see, hear, and taste the goodness He is about to give us. The moment God chooses spring breaks



forth and new life returns, and with-it incredible hope (70). Though the valleys may be dark, dismal, and impossible to exit by one’s own effort; fear not for the moment the voice of the Lord sounds over our troubled waters new life is granted and no longer

do we feel darkness is our only friend! The dark night of the soul cannot overcome the Light of our very best friend Jesus who having carried us in our darkest, most painful moments now invites the inflicted to stand in the whirlwind of tribulation and dance with Him in the newness of life and blessings. The moment His hand touches ours and He speaks but a single phrase, “be still,” the storm obeys, dissipates and the sun shines again. Spring has come! It is a time of gladness, joy, and great

fanfare of jubilation (73) for the once parched, barren land has come back to life and while the winter scars often remain, they no longer consume us in a pit of despair but instead propel us to grab hold of whatever the Lord wants us to plant in His glorious vineyard! It is a time for emotional, moral, and physical healing as one travels on God’s prepared highway that though in winter was difficult, dangerous, and grueling to endure (87) but in spring has become smooth, straight, and peaceful for the Lord’s yoke is truly light (Matthew 11:28-30)! It is not only a time of great rejoicing but also in faithful obedience and gratitude of having been saved from winter’s bitter, painful cold one is freed up to plow, plant, and clean the fields of our lives in a manner that is holy and pleasing unto He who purchased us at the price of His very life (1 Corinthians 6:20)!

Springtime Renewal

One of the best pieces of Scripture to capture what spring really feels like is Isaiah 35 (69). Let’s read this passage slowly and carefully for contained within is a glorious picture of what it feels like to leave winter with all its dreariness and tribulations to enter springtime where new life is sown, and hope is plentiful.

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.

Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;

they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.

**Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way;
say to those with fearful hearts,
“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will
come with vengeance; with divine
retribution he will come to save you.”**

**Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the
deaf unstopped.**

**Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue
shout for joy.**

**Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in
the desert.**

**The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty
ground bubbling springs.**

**In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds
and papyrus will grow.**

**And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of
Holiness;**

it will be for those who walk on that Way.

**The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not
go about on it.**

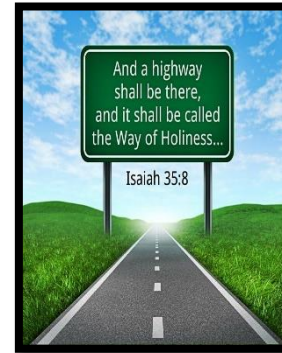
**No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will
not be found there.**

**But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the
LORD has rescued will return.**

**They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will
crown their heads.**

**Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and
sighing will flee away.**

Isaiah begins by stating that the desert and parched lands will rejoice and blossom upon the arrival of spring, for it is then that one gets to experience the glory and splendor of the Lord who transforms deadness to life (1-2). Spring is a time for renewals, two of which I will briefly mention. First, spring is the time



when dreariness, pain, sorrow, and isolation give way to hope and peace as we sit at the feet of our Master.

“Times of crises often enfeeble and terrify us. We hide in the clefts and jump at shadows. We cower in upper rooms. Our confidence in God, ourselves, in our church, in others, withers down to nearly nothing” (78).

Spring is like vindication of what appears to be “cosmic rigging.” While we know chance happens to everyone

and thus, we were thrust into the death of winter, how our emotions soar in jubilation when “death” is swallowed up in the victory of blessings (80) of He who controls all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16)! And second and more importantly, spring follows up the winter’s pruning with filling one’s spiritual house with the righteousness of the Lord.

In spring Isaiah states, we get the opportunity to walk on a highway of Holiness, where the unclean may not venture nor do they control (8-10). The attempts of the lion to send his fiery darts are thwarted by our faithful obedience to the Lord who has not only redeemed but also promises to continually rescue and protect us.

If we are faithful and build our spiritual house on the foundation of the Lord then we will enter Zion with singing, and everlasting joy will crown our heads. Those who are faithful to their very best friend Jesus will no longer experience terror, pain, and darkness of the night but instead gladness and unspeakable joy of being safe and under the wings of His loving arms where they can grow and become more like Him!

Spring is not just the season for emotional and spiritual but physical healing as well. Some say that men are like “big babies” when they get an ailment of any kind but in winter one does not experience the temporary inconveniences and suffering of a snuffle or two but unspeakable pain and lack of mobility from part(s) of our bodies that no longer function properly. I recently



went through prostate surgery and for what seemed like an eternity, ten long, grueling days of peeing in a catheter. How I dislike that dreaded device for often it backed up and made me feel like my bladder was about to explode and gave me excruciating pain every time I

merely moved or coughed to clear my throat! I can honestly say that it can feel like darkness is your friend when pleasurable days are being drowned out in torrential downpour of pain! As I am now in my third week of recovery, and I can see the spring vastly approaching!

How I resonate with Isaiah’s words that the day is soon coming when I will “leap like a deer” (6) and the “burning sands of tribulations” will give way to “thirsty bubbling springs” (7) of good health, renewal, and planting seeds of righteousness!

Spring is when the “eyes of the blind are opened, the ears of the deaf are unstopped” (5), water gushes forth in what used to be a desert (6) because the Lord has strengthened the feeble hands, steadied the knees that used to give way, and replaced fear of perpetual winter with the hope that comes from seeing spring break forth by the hand of the Great Physician! Praise be to God He who has entered the fellowship of our sufferings graciously and mercifully plucks us from the abys of pain and darkness, places us on a firm foundation where strength is renewed and one no longer grows tired or weary (Isaiah 40:31) while running after His good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:12)!

Spring Activities

Spring is the time of newness, growth, and splendor. How I love to smell the very subtle soft, sweet, musky scent of flowers blooming, brown grass giving way to green lawns, and birds returning and chirping their beautiful songs! In its regeneration spring is the perfect time to get up and plow, plant, and clean for His name’s sake. A field unplowed, is the perfect opportunity to plant seeds of righteousness (96). While plowing is sweaty and dirty, time consuming, and at times exasperating it is necessary if we want to spiritually grow. “Plowing is the discipline of deeper attentiveness” (97).

Though the rewards are distant and tentative at best, we listen and obey the voice of our Master in faith and assurance that He alone can shepherd our lives in the vine to produce more than we can ask or imagine!

To be like Elijah and hear that often “small voice” (1 Kings 19:10-18) we need to bath our lives in prayer and the Word (97).



While “all roads might lead to Rome,” not all roads, especially the broad path, are a faithful response to the Lord’s calling, nor do they result in a harvest of fruit! We earnestly practice the disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission,

and service so that the Lord might plow furrows into our stony hearts so that in the softness of our soil they might take root, grow fruit and be an honourable harvest unto the Lord. May our “life song” be “take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee!”

Plowing the fields will not result in a harvest until the seeds of righteousness are planted into our lives! How easy is it to read a great book filled with spiritual truths that excites the mind but, in the end, gets swallowed up either in indifference or worldly concerns! Of what value is our rhetoric and even enthusiasm to share words inspired by the Holy Spirit when we ourselves are disqualified from the race for having refused to act upon His words? Is not James correct in saying that “anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone

who looks at his face in the mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like (1:23-24)? Spring is the perfect time to take what we have learned and put it into practice. How futile it truly is to seek the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength only to find Him and then reject living the very words that are meant to spring up within us so strongly that they result in not only changed attitudes but actions as well!



It would be utter foolishness to go through painful pruning in winter to only after having swept the house clean to leave it unplanted and in doing so invite the “powers of this dark world” (Ephesians 6:12) to fill our lives once again with sin that in the past has so easily entangled us (Hebrews 12:1)!

I know that it is not easily to take that leap of faith for taking the time and resources to plant might seem like it is threatening our “self” preservation and gratification, but if we truly want a harvest of righteousness then it simply must come from faith that when we seek first His kingdom all things that we need will be added unto us as well (Matthew 6:33)!

And finally, spring is the best time to clean the inside of the cup! Every spring my mother would survey our home and make a list of all the things that had gotten dirty and needed a good cleaning. If anyone is in Christ, states Apostle Paul, they have become a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come

(2 Corinthians 5:17). Have we not spent enough time doing what the pagans do (1 Peter 4:3)? Do we honestly think we can receive the benefits of believing without adhering to the truth in which they reside?¹ The Lord who



carried us through the cold, dreary and painful winter not so that we might indulge in our every fantasy of self-gratification but so that we might respond to His grace and mercy with Isaiah's statement, "here I am send me" (6:8)! To make sure

we are not wandering on the broad path may our springtime prayer be, "search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way ever lasting" (Psalms 139:23-24)! And once our sin is confessed may we humbly ask the Lord to show and enable us to use our spiritual gifts to further His kingdom.

Imagine the seeds and eventual harvest we could receive if "our comings, goings, routines, disruptions, work and play, discoveries and disappointments" (104) were examined and redeemed in the light of His glory!

If you are in springtime, wake up, enjoy, plant seeds of righteousness and trust that those in the vine can bear much fruit if they plant the Lord's seeds for their lives!

¹ I am not sure where I got this quote from but it is not my own.