

Coach House Church

BEACONS

AUTUMN

6TH NOVEMBER 2020

Autumn is a beautiful time of year. As the leaves on the trees turn to various shades of red, yellow and golden brown they offer up a wonderful display for us to enjoy. All around Heaton Chapel there are many trees lining the sides of the roads so we get plenty of opportunity, and at times you can find yourself totally surrounded by this amazing natural event. Sadly this brief time is over all too quickly but for this short time it serves as a reminder of the glory of God, for it was Gods design that made the trees work in the way that they do.

There is, though, a downside to this brief display, it also reminds us that Winter is on the way. Winter is traditionally a barren season, whilst Summer is a time of plenty, Winter can be a time when there are shortages. For some of us the lack of daylight in Winter can be a real problem.

Before we give Winter a really bad rap, we need to remember that Seasons are actually part of Gods creation. In fact seasons were brought into being on the fourth day of creation when God said "Let the lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark seasons, days and years". God planned this provision for us for a reason. He did this because He knew that there would be a need for it. And not just for us but also to govern the rest of the plants and animals that he had created.

Winter is an important part of this cycle and so far from being a bad season Winter is actually part of Gods plan to break up the year. After the Exodus, when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, God instituted a number of festivals with the key purpose of remembering Him and worshipping Him but they also served to help break up the years into separate parts.

So what can we learn from this?

Well we can use it to teach us how to get through difficult times.

As we face the prospect of another lock-down I have a real worry that we are missing out on the events that punctuate our years. When we are locked indoors the different days tend to merge into one. With the unfortunate consequence of having to close the church again we will need to go back to meeting on Zoom each week. Now whilst this is better than not meeting it does have the drawback of meaning that we are still stuck in our own houses.

I don't know about you, but during the first lock-down I found that work days and weekends all seemed to merge into one. I had no holidays planned, no days out, no events, no parties and whilst we tried to keep Sunday special being at home all week meant that except the service on zoom it didn't feel much different. Even though it was Spring and Summer it felt like a Winter. This time the latest lock-down will be in Winter and I am worried that it will feel like a very long Winter.

So how can we get through this time? Well first of all we need to understand that lean times in our lives are not a problem to God, in fact sometimes they are ordained by God for our benefit. In fact Ecclesiastes 3:1 says "For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under Heaven"

The trees lose their leaves and stand barren for their own good. If they didn't take time in Autumn to draw up the nutrients out of the leaves, the leaves would still be damaged or die of cold in the Winter and then the tree wouldn't be able to re-use the nutrients in the Spring. It is this process of drawing out the nutrients that makes the leaves change colour. The tree is making proper preparations for the coming Winter. Sometimes we can't see that a spiritual Winter is coming but we can still make preparations. In fact God himself has already made preparations for us. As we read the word and spend time in fellowship we are storing up the nutrients that we will need to get us going in the Spring.

Now when we see the trees in Winter all barren and dry it might seem that the tree isn't doing anything. We can't see any evidence that the tree is doing something but just because we can't see it doesn't mean nothing is happening. During Winter the tree is circulating those nutrients, getting them into the right places ready for spring. The chemicals are being re-formed to make them usable for the next seasons growth.

So it should be with us. Being locked down means we can't go out to other peoples houses, shopping trips, cinema, concerts are all off. This gives us time to

prepare ourselves for the new season. Like the tree we have our nutrients in the form of the scripture. Our Bible gives us all we need to get through each day.

I think that during this time we can take time to take stock of where we are as Christians. Times of study and prayer are version of the trees re-organisation of the nutrients so that we will be ready when the season changes.

Winter is often an impediment to getting on with a plan. It delays us because of unsuitable conditions. The apostle Paul was delayed on his way to Rome because of the Winter. In the book of Acts chapter 27 tells us that whilst sailing past the island of Crete the winter weather made it impossible to cross the Mediterranean Sea safely so they decided to find a safe port. The first port they came to was deemed unsuitable and although Paul warned them that it was a bad idea to press on they tried to sail a little further on to find a better port. Unfortunately they didn't get there as a storm whipped up and they ended up a long way from where they had intended to be. Hard as Winter can be we need accept the place God has brought us to because Spring will come.

In the Old Testament in the book of Song of Songs it says "Look, the Winter is past, and the rains are over and gone. The flowers are springing up, the season of birds singing has come, and the cooing of turtle doves fills the air. The fig trees are forming young fruit and the fragrant grapevines are blossoming"

This scripture is part of a love story between a man and a woman but of course it looks forward to a much greater love story. It tells us of the love God has for us when He sent His only Son to die for our sins. When Jesus came He ended the "Winter" that the whole world was then in, the winter of the lack of knowledge of Jesus. We are blessed because that message has been taken to almost the whole world, and that message came to us. The only safe way to get through whatever winter we have is to wait upon Jesus, we can't do it in our own strength, we can't go thinking that we can just make it to the next port. Jesus told us that the flowers of the field don't worry about what they do because God cares for them. Well God cares infinitely more for you than the flowers or trees.

When you see the trees shedding their leaves, or barren in Winter remember that this is only for a season, the leaves and flowers and fruit will return in an even better way.

Jesus will bring us through this Winter lock-down stronger and better if we just trust in Him and accept the opportunity to prepare for the better times ahead.



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