

Coach House Church BEACONS

COMPOST

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If like me you grew up or live in the countryside , you would love the quiet , the fresh air and nature surrounding you. I feel at home surrounded by farm land and greenery. The business and the stress of the city seems far away , as from another world, when you observe the animals grazing in the field.

Before I'll tell you more about country living I'd like us to read Ephesians 2 from verse 1 to verse 10.

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Going back to the countryside, where I grew up , in rural Romania, life was very simple and repetitive. Early in the morning ,people would lead their animals - mainly cows and goats - to the local herd on a field outside the village where they would graze all day under the lazy eye of the herdsman.

The morning gathering ritual was by no means quiet but it was serene; the animals were following the herdsman's whistle like well behaved children; neighbours were chatting in the street , putting the world to right ; people going to work in the field early, trying to avoid the heat of the midday sun. Like a well oiled machine the villagers knew where they needed to be and what they had to do. Together with the scenic surroundings , the countryside has some disadvantages too: there are no immediate shops where you can just pop in when you forget to get butter on your weekly shop; there is no ice cream van coming past the house; you need to be really organised when it comes to weekly necessities as facilities are not near by.

Another less attractive things about the countryside is the smell coming from the stables. At my parents farm , behind the stables where the cows and the goats lived , there was a massive pile of animal waste mixed with straw and leftover hay. The smell of it on a hot summer day was not pretty to put it politely. The dung was not kept just to make everyone uncomfortable. It had its purpose. It was used as fertiliser for the vegetable garden in the spring and also , in autumn when the ground was turned. Keeping compost and fertiliser in our minds , let's look at our lives .

According to the passage we read earlier , we were killed by sin. Before meeting Jesus people are dead - spiritually dead . Verse 1 tells us" you were dead in your transgression and sin". However, the Bible does not stop there , further down in verse 4 it says " but because of his great love for us God , who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ.

By God's mercy we live again through Jesus . And our new life is very different to the old one . Verse 3 tells us that In our old life we were following the ways of the world and it's ruler - the evil one . " All of us lived among them at one time gratifying its desires and thoughts" Furthermore , we are not only getting a new life , we but are made new . 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us this: " therefore if anyone is in Christ , he is a new creation . The old has gone and the new has come ."

Thanks to Jesus , this new us can now be seated in God's presence where the old self could not go. In verse 6 we read" and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus- and it goes on telling us the reason why- in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace."

He gives us a new life , makes us a new creation and wants to bless us still. This blessing comes in the form of us becoming more and more like our Lord ; he is changing our hearts and minds from following our selfish and worldly way into following and being like Him.

Just like the compost, this transformation takes time and some lessons are not understood first time around so they need to be repeated.

And as the compost is used to fertilise the vegetables , the lessons we learn will help others through their learning. It's a well known concept in the Bible: God uses something ugly and bad to teach or bring about something good or He turns it into a blessing . No experience is wasted with our Lord .

Further still, when we pass into eternity, or our Lord returns , we will be with Him forever enjoying his presence . Revelation 21:4 says this " He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning , nor crying , nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away "

As you drive through Stockport on the M60 you might be lucky enough to catch the smell from the sewage works. It is a reminder of what you were once like, but as you carry on your journey the smell will fade. Fully decomposed compost has a really sweet earthy smell, it's quite pleasant, and nothing like how it started. Take your journey with Jesus and your past will rot away to become sweet smelling and useful.

Lord thank you for transforming our ugliness into beauty. Give us an open hart to accept your lessons and be willing to submit to you. In Jesus' name

Amen



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