



The Promise of the Season

Autumn has always been my favorite time of year. The combination of colors and smells, warm days and cool nights blend together to make the season a veritable banquet for the senses (and allergies). Autumn is filled with wonder and change, death and new life, but most of all, autumn is filled with hope. Look around! That which only months earlier was so filled with life now seems to be fading away; and at the same time, one only has to look out at a field of freshly sprouting winter wheat to see that which had faded away only months earlier is now filled with new life. The squirrels and rabbits and birds are busily preparing for that which is to come.

Autumn signals not only the coming of winter, but the promise of spring. I think of autumn as a sign from God, kind of like the rainbow in the story of Noah, a promise of what is to come. The cross is a sign like that as well. Many protestant churches display an empty cross (as opposed to the crucifix) because they believe it is a sign of life—but without the death of Jesus we have no resurrection. Our lives are filled with signs from God; some remind us of life and some remind us of our mortality. Sometimes it is difficult for us to understand the significance of these “signs” until time has passed and we are able to look back with clarity. For instance, the death of a loved one, especially when the loved one is young and seemingly has their whole life in front of them. Their passing causes us to ache and even sometimes burn with anger—and often that anger is directed toward God. But as time passes, hopefully that anger and pain begin to subside and that is when we can look back and see something beautiful—the blessing of love and the very presence of that loved one in our lives. The death of a loved one is never easy, but just think about how blessed we are simply by the fact that we had them in our lives—even if that time was far too short. Signs like these from God remind us of what was, what is, and what will be.

When I was a Vicar (pastoral intern) in North Canton, Ohio, I remember looking out my office window across the cemetery to a field of new winter wheat. There was a fresh dusting of light snow on the ground and the trees were in their glory dressed in an array of beautiful colors. The contrast of the headstones, the trees, the snow, and the green blades of wheat brought me to a moment of complete awe in the “works of God’s hands.” Later that day while preparing for a meeting to complete the planning of our advent season, I was struck as I read the words from Isaiah, chapter 40:

*“prepare the way of the LORD . . . then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together.”*

Autumn and Advent are inextricably connected; joined not only by their position on the calendar but by their purpose—hope! Prepare, watch, and wait with excited anticipation for the promise of new life.



As we journey our way through this beautiful autumn season and turn our face toward the cold winds of winter, remember, God’s promise of new life will never fail us. Look closely! See the signs of hope? They’re all around us—the colors and smells, sunny days and very cold nights, sprouting crocus and buds on the trees. Prepare, watch, and wait. May your Thanksgiving be filled with gratitude and your Advent be filled with the promise of new life and the excited anticipation of Christ’s return.

Faith, Hope, Love & Peace,
Pastor Dennis