

Sermon Archive 260

Sunday 8 September, 2019

Knox Church, Christchurch

Spring flower reflections

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



Song of songs 2: 10-15

A Reflection: Love reveals Spring

Out from the heart of the singer comes a song. The earth is awakening around her. She may not have noticed, had her beloved not spoken to her. There's something about being loved that opens your eyes to the beauty and life around you. My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away'.

So **then** she sees that the winter has passed, and that the rain has gone. **Then** she notices that flowers appear on the earth and that vines are in blossom. The birds are singing, and fragrance is in the air. Her world becomes this place full of life, (she **SEES** her world as full of life), because her beloved has spoken to her. He calls her his "dove". He tells her that her face is lovely. Spring and love live side to side, they kiss, within this song of songs.

On many a Spring Flower Sunday, we say "Spring comes, so God loves us". God's crayons of yellow and red and pink and blue write quite clearly "I love you". And that is true. Spring is a gift - quite full of love. But let me tell you: in the **Autumn** we are loved. In the **Winter** we are loved. Whether there is blossom on the trees, or the branches are bare, whether turtle doves are singing, or all is silent, we are loved. Were Spring never to come again, and were it always to be July, we would be loved. Love comes first - and only from God's love does any Spring come.

So I say, let's love and celebrate the flowers. Let's love and celebrate the lengthening of the evenings. Let's love and celebrate the tui in the garden, and the warming of the day. Let's love chasing the little foxes (who chases little foxes - maybe little fox chasers!) And let's put it in a

posy to share with others. Why? Of course, because we are loved.

And then, in these reflections, let's go to other places where, whether Winter or Spring, we are loved. Let's go past the flute players into the house of a dead little girl. Let's go past the stone rolled over Lazarus's tomb. Let's go to a place as yet only dreamed of in a new creation, and see the real Spring. The Spring time of God, flowing from the love of God. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away [with me]." Life stories. Stories of life. A coming to life.

Matthew 9: 18-19, 23-26

A Reflection: Can God call a flower to blossom?

Spring comes every year, a familiar and well-expected friend. We all expect it, and it comes. In the cycles of the earth, the renewal of life is kind of expected. Things die for the winter, then come back for the Spring. There is no death, for this season's falling seed is next season's harvest. Spring is always coming. This is how things work in in the garden. This is what speaks to us of God - life is obvious and unremarkable.

But beyond the garden, and its regular, reassuring patterns, we find the house of the leader of the synagogue. His daughter has died, and there's no Spring here to be expected. (What was said? In the **Autumn** we are loved. In the **Winter** we are loved. Whether there is blossom on the trees, whether turtle doves are singing, were Spring never to come again, we would be loved.)

The leader of our synagogue will not notice the flowers. The flute players have assembled, and winter's setting in. All he has is an invitation already issued to someone who's said to be speaking and living and acting and hoping for God. That God-speaking One comes into the place of death. He says: 'Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him.

Laugh away! Can God call a flower to blossom? Can God make a bird to sing? Can God lengthen the days and call it Spring?

Whether it be birth and daughtering, or flutes and mourning, we are loved - and life comes forth. Jesus visits that house, because God loves that house. Spring time comes from the love of God. "Arise, my

love, my fair one, and come away [with me].” Life stories. Stories of life. A coming to life.

John 11: 38-44

A Reflection: Lazarus’ deeper Spring

This strange Spring-time man is back. Last time he didn’t seem to care that it was winter. He just barged past the flute players and brought in the life born of love. This time he seems to know it’s winter - such that it’s cut to his heart - and made him cry. “Greatly disturbed” is how ancient authorities describe him as he comes to this particular tomb. I guess he knew this one.

And more; this time he’s not a wee bit late (just after the daffodils). This time he’s **four days** late - such that the family’s talking about the possibility of a great big stench coming from the tomb. And this time, no one’s laughing at him - and his silly Spring-time belief - because they’re too busy crying. This is an environment where there’s no room for cynicism, or mockery, or unkindness, because they’re all together crying about the winter - and what (no, whom) it has taken away.

But still, determinably, the Christ of God’s Spring is coming to them. Not because it’s Spring in the world, but because God loves - and love compels him on with his gift of life. God’s spring comes from love. Without love, there is no Spring.

Arriving, he talks about belief. He speaks of glory. He looks upwards and addresses his God. He says something which causes all people around him to believe that the “One who loves” is also the “One who hears”.

Then a dead man walks from his tomb. Is this the Spring of God?

My God, this is a reflection. No sermon. No claim for resuscitation. I don’t understand the depths of life and death. Who does? (Does he? That Spring-time man who lived among us?)

He went to houses where life had gone. He went to those houses

because God loves those houses. Spring time comes from the love of God. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away [with me]." Then we notice life. Life stories. Stories of life. A coming to life.

Revelation 21: 1-7

A Reflection: Until God speaks of new creation

You may hear me tell stories of houses visited by Jesus in the past. Lovely stories! And you may think, nevertheless, that yes, winter's followed by Spring, then by summer, then by Autumn and another dose of winter.

The years do turn, don't they? . . . Don't they. They turn, grass withers - that's our pattern - lived out by our experience.

Until God speaks of a new creation. A time of making *all* things new. On that Spring-time, will we remember the smaller, but articulate Spring-times brought to the gospel households of old? Will we remember the little girl restored to her father? Will we remember Lazarus restored to his sisters? Will we remember the Spring-time Christ walking in the Easter garden? Who knows! But love opens the eyes to Spring-time. Spring proves nothing. It simply gives God praise for love.

Well, that we may join in the praising, we turn to the flowers.

Bless you, little flowers, in your beauty. Full of your confidence and being new, uninhibited, innocent, unashamed, you speak to us of life renewed. You adorn our world with such loveliness - providing we have eyes to see you - providing we've been provoked by love. And indeed we have been. Our dead ones are raised. Our wounded ones are healed. From the winter comes the Spring. Spring shows what love does. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away [with me]." Life stories. Stories of life. A coming to life. The God of life.

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