

Sunday October 4th, 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, gather up all that is dead in me like leaves from the ground into your redeeming arms, in order that you might scatter forth into the world all that you have brought to life in me so that it might be shared graciously and unselfishly in the world. For I ask it in Christ name, Amen

Hymn: For the fruit of all creation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbBUFSOkbdM>

For the fruit of all creation,
thanks be to God.
For the gifts bestowed on every nation,
thanks be to God.
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safekeeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will be done.
In the help we give our neighbour,
God's will be done.
In our worldwide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,

most of all that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

Let us pray together

Gracious God, be with me now as I think about how a seed must die in order to bring forth new life. Help me to trust in your life-giving processes even when they are painful, to let go of all that needs to be released, and to take up all that you would have me take up in faith and love. For I ask it in Christ's name, Amen

Today's Gospel Reading: John 12:24-26

Time to Reflect

"For human beings, Autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together. For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad."

~Edwin Teale

Autumn, that season between Summer and Winter which North Americans, like myself, refer to as "the Fall," is here. Perhaps more than any other, this season is filled with poignant contradictions. On the one hand, it is full of death and sadness. On the other, it is replete with beauty and life. On the one hand, it is a time of dead leaves. On the other, it is a time when, as Edwin Teale observed, nature sows and scatters something new abroad.

I am not certain why North Americans usually speak of Fall rather than Autumn but my guess is that it has something to do with the leaves "falling" from the trees. It is a mysterious and beautiful process. Green

leaves turn to gold, orange, and sometimes even to red before they “fall” to the earth.

There is, of course, a similar cycle for human beings. I am thinking here not only of our physical death. It involves more than that. For human beings the realities of Fall occur many times during life’s journey. Things may be going along fine and then one day something happens that causes us to lose connection with our roots. A relationship comes to an end, a loved one dies, a move is forced upon us, the world changes, and suddenly we don't know who we are. The lifeline between us and those things which had, until that point, sustained and stabilized is severed, causing us to experience a “fall.” The effect can be, painful and disorientating.

The good news though is that we never fall forever. Eventually, we always hit the ground of God’s love. One of the great Christian thinkers of the twentieth century, Paul Tillich, thought of God as, *the ground of our being*. God, said Tillich, is that ground which undergirds and underpins the life of every being, from which all things spring, and to which all things keep returning. A relationship may end, a loved one may die, the world may change but even the worst of it can only ever serve to ground us in that greater source of life from which we sprang in the first place.

Finally, when we do come to our life’s end, we believe that even then new life will be in the making. At that time, on that ground, and in that love we will take up our place amidst the rich glorious colours of what you call Autumn and I call Fall; and then God, Himself, may sow and scatter something new abroad.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

We see signs of summer's passing in golden leaves,
shortening days, misty mornings, autumn glow. We sense its passing in rain that

dampens, winds that chill, Harvest's bounty placed on show. Creator God, who brings forth both green shoot and hoar frost,
sunrise and sunset,
we bring our thanks
for seeds that have grown,
harvests gathered,
storehouses filled,
mouths fed.
And, as your good earth rests
through winter's cold embrace,
we look forward to its re-awakening
when kissed by Spring's first touch.

Some prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

Eternal God, I give thanks this day for the beauty of the earth and the wonder of my life. I give thanks for the changing of the seasons and the movement of the stars. I give thanks for Jesus, my rock and my friend. Bless your world this day, I pray, and use me to do acts of discipleship in it. Be with those who are hungry and do not know the luxury of three square meals, complete with snacks in between, and as many hot drinks as I like. Be with those who are fighting Covid 19 and are fearful about their health. Be with those are fighting addictions and help me to be wary of things by which I can fall addicted. Be with those who are facing violence on a battle field or in their own homes. Bless every human being, I pray, with grace enough and faith enough, to bring them home to you now and forevermore. For I say it, and mean it, in Jesus name who taught me to pray saying....

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Autumn Days

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ni9Cm2ZqPLQ>

A prayer of blessing

Bless us Lord as we seek to see that which is beautiful in the changing seasons, and seek to do that which is faithful in the passing of time.
Amen

Original Materials by Blair Kirkby

All

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