

**Meditations for New Year's Eve**  
**"Through Every Season of Life"**  
**December 31, 2016**

Spring

In the spring of his earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth and preached his first sermon. Following his 40-day period of temptation in the desert, he came home. Filled with vigor and strength, he declared to those who had known him all his life how the year of the Lord's favor, prophesied by Isaiah, had now been fulfilled in their hearing. Truly, God was doing a new thing! Scripture does not record what season of year this took place in, but we can easily imagine how it could well be spring - a new beginning in God's marvelous plan of salvation heralded by the freshness and new life of spring.

Springtime signals the beginning of the life cycle; a fresh start for the earth. New hope rises within us as soft breezes replace harsh, cold winds. Following the long winter, songbirds return, and with them longer daylight that gives new life to the meadows and woodlands "robed in flow'rs of blooming spring." In his wisdom, God chose this season to give new life to the world by his Son's bursting of death's strong bands, robbing the grave of its power. Was it merely coincidence that brought this about? Some would say this, and nothing more. But in faith, we sing of Easter joy! We sing of a risen Savior whose rising from the dead has awakened the whole world, bringing new life to every living thing.

What was begun in Nazareth was completed on Golgotha. The accepted sacrifice was laid in the earth, like a bulb of early spring. The promise of new life could only be received in faith and trust of what was to come. Like that bulb, the promise of new life was found deep within the seemingly lifeless shell. Like that bulb, a beautiful and glorious flower has emerged whose fragrance has filled all of creation.

In the springtime of our life, there is youthful exuberance and zeal. As in the season of spring, so in life energy pulses and abounds within us, moving us along in our growth toward maturity. Through every season of life, give us patient hope as we look to you, O Lord, to complete the good work which you have begun in us.

Summer

"Summer is a time to celebrate the wonders and abundance of creation. It is a celebration of the goodness of God" (*Sundays and Seasons*, Year B-2006, p. 220). Surely this was the season of the year when Jesus pointed out a sermon in nature: the lilies of the field, clothed in glory and splendor that no king, not even Solomon, could hope to attain. "Summer is a time for dipping our hands into the vast abundance of God's supply of manna; tasting and savoring the wonderful richness and juiciness of creation and feasting in celebration until our bodies, minds, and spirits are overflowing with God's goodness... In summer the earth's productiveness cries out for attention and thanks to God. Through all these works of creation and more God speaks to us of grace, abundance, and goodness. Let us relax into the season and listen for God's word in the natural world all around us. As the seed that is planted in the ground is expected to grow and mature, so too the word that is planted in us is expected to grow and come to fruition" (Ibid).

In the summer of life we are at our peak. Like the earth beneath us, we are busily producing and bringing forth the work of our hands and the fruit of our labors. And yet even in the summer of abundance, we may not be satisfied. We may be fearful of not having enough. We may become distrustful of God, turning to ourselves and our own resources to guarantee enough. The words of Jesus call us back: "But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you" (Luke 12:28-31).

In the summertime of our life, through every season of life, give us patient hope as we look to you, O Lord, to complete the good work which you have begun in us.

### Autumn

“Autumn is a time for gathering of crops, of children [and students], of community... The color is still high, but it has deepened and grown richer. It is the season of ripening - both of the fruits in nature and of the spiritual fruit that is in us” (Ibid, p. 267). As the days hasten on amidst falling leaves, cooling temperatures and shorter daylight hours point us toward a greater truth: we draw ever nearer to the final harvest, that great in-gathering of souls, when in “... the fullness of time, [God will] unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth” (Ephesians 3:10).

Autumn is a time to return home. “Perhaps we have wandered far and wide in the months of summer, observing, experiencing, and learning many lessons” (Ibid). In the autumn, there is a deep desire we have to join loved ones on special days for special meals. Returning home takes many different forms. Home may be returning to the place of our childhood; it may be joining our children in their homes. It may be a central meeting place that gathers all together. And that is really what home is: not so much a place, but people; loved ones coming together. This desire we have to return home, a homecoming, serves to remind us of our life’s deepest desire: to be at home with the Lord. And so our autumn prayer becomes: “Even so, Lord, quickly come to your final harvest home.”

In the autumn of our life, we are conscious of the days hastening on; the ever quickening passage of time. Autumn is a time for reflection, and for sharing with the next generation the wisdom we have learned; of God’s marvelous providential care for us through all the seasons of life. In the autumn of life, what will we leave to those who come after us? The legacy of a living faith in “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... [who] has predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...” (Ephesians 1:3, 5) – this is best gift we can offer, for time and for eternity.

In the autumn of our life, through every season of life, give us patient hope as we look to you, O Lord, to complete the good work which you have begun in us.

### Winter

There is a stark beauty in the winter landscape. It is easy to see beauty in the freshness of spring, the richness of summer, or the glory of autumn. It is not always so easy to find beauty in winter, but it is there for those who wish to see it. Even in the highly developed, densely populated setting in which we live, God’s gracious ordering of the seasons is not lost on us. Even in gray and dreary days when the world around us is void of any snow covering, the bleak loveliness of winter is revealed in bare branches, early sunsets, and holy waiting.

Winter is about waiting and patience - things which are often in short supply in our life. We wait for bright sunshine to lift our spirits. We wait for the first signs of the coming spring. We wait for new life. It is not easy to be patient in our waiting. We may become discouraged when God’s timing does not match our own. We may lose hope, and like the dry winter air, become stiff and brittle, prone to breaking.

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (Galatians 4:4). This is the miracle of winter: the warmth of God’s love penetrating deeply into the coldest depths of our human nature through the coming of God’s own Son. We need not worry whether the precise date of Jesus’ birth was on December 25 in the winter, or at some other time of year. What truly matters is not when he came into the world, but that he did come into the world. His coming makes our hearts glad. In the darkness and cold of winter, we sing for joy.

In the winter of our life, through every season of life, give us patient hope as we look to you, O Lord, to complete the good work which you have begun in us.