

Scattered Thoughts for Short Attention Spans – Part 2

Countenance

After being away on vacation for ten days and spending two weeks days in self-isolation, my inner introvert asserted itself. I just wanted to be insular, work the garden and eat junk food. Maybe it was a way to deal with the craziness of what is going on in the world. You know, “duck and cover” and “every man for himself” - that kind of thing.

Things changed when our home group had a Zoom meeting.

The experience of seeing a collage of familiar faces and hearing their voices all interacting in real time stirred something inside. Rather than just a passive observer, I was drawn into a connection that reached to my heart and pulled me out of...um...whatever.

It dawned on me that real live faces communicate something far more than just an image – it is our identity, who we are. Perhaps the better word for this is “countenance”, and I think this is what is meant in Numbers 6.

*“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”*

The Lord’s countenance (*all* of who He is) is toward us and shines on us. As we look to Him we are drawn out into His presence in all His fullness...and there is peace. Coram Deo

Eden

Along with shortages of toilet paper, it is hard to find anything gardening related – seeds and starter plants – that kind of stuff. It seems with the present worries there is a deep yearning to spend time in peaceful places, like a garden. Some would say this proves that humans, when stripped of our technology and busy lives, have an innate desire to be connected with nature. In other words, gardens are in our DNA.

I agree in part, but this bent toward nature points to a far deeper yearning – one where our hearts long not for creation, but for our Creator. Even the songwriter Joni Mitchell knew this truth.

“We are stardust, we are golden. And we’ve got to get ourselves back to the garden”.

Yes, THE garden. Eden. A garden that God planted and where Adam and Eve enjoyed a divine companionship with Him. A place of innocence, before sin entered the world and corrupted our relationship with Him. A condition of the heart – a good, pure, peaceful space where we all want to be.

Is this possible? Return to Eden? Yes and even better, for through the Cross we can return to a place where God is not just with us, but he dwells *in us*. An anonymous writer (which means I can’t remember who it was) pointed out that in John 19:41, the cross and garden are connected.

*At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb,
in which no one had ever been laid.*

Is it any wonder there was a garden where Jesus died, was buried and rose again? It is any wonder that Mary thought Jesus was a gardener? Is it any wonder that deep down we all long to be in peace, free from the vagaries of sin in a seamless, eternal relationship with our Creator? The hymn says it beautifully:

I come to the Garden alone...

And he walks with me and he talks with me,
And he tells me I am his own....

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