

.....AND THE LIVING IS EASY

INTRODUCTION

Luke 9:18-24

When John asked me to this service, it was supposed to have been for a Sunday a few weeks ago. I went home and looked up the lectionary for the date. It was the story of John the Baptist being beheaded. I thought to myself, that is hardly conducive to a warm Sunday morning in the summer. And then he changed the date, and once again I went home and looked up the lectionary for that date. It was about how women should be sub-serviant to men. I thought if I spoke about that..even if I got away with it here, I wouldn't get in the door when I got home. It was at that point that I decided not to go with the lectionary and speak about something much lighter as we emerge from this terrible pandemic and try to find some normalcy in our lives and enjoy this beautiful summer as God meant for us.

.....AND THE LIVING IS EASY

Luke 9:18-24

This morning I ask you to think with me about summer, about the spirituality of the summer. We are getting to the end of summer. The kids have had a long recess from school and must be excited to go back to their friends and a more structured life. Adults too, many have been away from work for a long time. And soon it will be time to go back to a normal life...whatever the new normal will be. The pandemic has left no one unscathed. But, that is not what I want to speak about this morning.

How do we experience God in the summer? Feel God in our bones...in the warmth of the sun, the heat of the day...the dryness and the rains of the season?

Do not worry that this is too primitive and, maybe, even too pagan, listen to the Psalmist:

You split open the springs and brooks:

You dried up ever-flowing streams.

Yours is the day, yours also the night;

You established the moon and the sun.

You fixed all the bounds of the earth;

You made summer and winter.

Just as artists are known through their works,

So too God is known through His works. God is 'The God of summer'. This mornings message will paint, I hope, a collage of ideas of how you might experience a little more of God in the summer.

- 1. Summer is a time of open road....a time for exploration..for winding down some small road you've never visited before. You want to go there just because your curious and it seems to call. God is down the road. God is to be found in exploration. God is met by the curious. St. Augustine wrote: 'Our hearts are restless until they find their rests in God'.**

PRAISE GOD FOR SUMMER ROADS WHICH PEAK OUR CURIOSITY. PRAISE GOD FOR OPEN SPACES.

- 2. Summer is a time for God through our free time.**

Summer us a time to leave our busy winter schedules, a time when the momentum of our life is interrupted. God is to be found in relaxation.

I have three grandsons in University and two granddaughters in University...and the baby will be there in another year. I am sure you have many grandchildren.

They have the privilege of spending time reading the great literature, and sciences. They find themselves writing papers, studying for tests, and passing examinations.

This is so ironic because the very word, 'Schola' from which we get the modern words, scholar and school, means FREE TIME.

Schools and scholarship were originally meant to interrupt the busy times and create some space, some free time to contemplate the mysteries of life. Now school is a time of pressure. So summer lets the schools out and it presents free time to us. Time for a rarest of activities...time to think.

PRAISE THE GOD OF THE SUMMER WHO GRANTS US TIME TO THINK.

- 3. Summer is a time for the experience of God through rest. GOD IS THE GOD OF THE SABBATH. God also rests. In one of the lovely Genesis creation stories, God works and then rests. 'Thus the heaven and earth were completed with all their mighty throng. On the sixth day God completed all the work that God had been doing and on the seventh day, God ceased from all the work. God**

blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on that day God ceased from all the work that God had been doing.

In summer's rest we meet the God of the seventh day...the God of rest. In rest...'in returning and rest you shall be saved. 'Be still and know that I am God,' saith the Lord,...be still.

PRAISE GOD FOR SUMMER'S REST WHEN WE MAY BE STILL AND KNOW THAT GOD IS THERE. PRAISE GOD FOR REST IN THE SUMMER!

4. Summer is a time for the soul to experience the God of Play. Summer reveals the playfulness of God who creates such an awesome variety of plants, and flowers, and hills and valleys, and bugs and dogs....and trout...sandy beaches and wooded mountains, rippling brooks and frothy oceans.

Summer is a time to give thanks for the laughter of children who run barefooted across the summer grass. God of Play delivers us from too much seriousness.

ALL PRAISE TO THE GOD OF PLAY! ALL PRAISE TO THE GOD OF SUMMER.

5. Summer is the time for the God of memory---to return to old haunts and familiar places. I remember as a little boy

going to the cottage at Grand Bend. I remember fishing off the break-water at Port Elgin..and having a banana split at the Dairy in the evening. I'm sure you have old haunts and familiar places that you remember from earlier days.

Summer us a time to be in touch with old haunts!

PRAISE TO THE GOD OF THE SUMMER WHO BRINGS US MEMORIES.

6. Summer is a time of stories. A time to read stories, to discover new stories. Loren Eisley, the biologist, tells the summer story of the star thrower. The star thrower is a man who walks the beach and carefully throws any starfish he sees washed up on the shore back into the ocean. Asked one day, 'why does he do that?' There are so many beaches and so many starfish washed up on the shores of this world! What difference does it make that you threw that starfish back in the water?'

The star thrower replies, 'it makes all the difference in the world to that star fish!'

ALL PRAISE TO THE GOD OF SUMMER.

7. Summer is a time for the God of work. In the summer the farmer must toil long, long, hours. The farmers perhaps more than the rest of us knows the God of the

Summer. He knows how dependent he is for the mixture of sun and rain. He is aware of the rhythms of life, of how the seasons come and go. How the God of the summer is bringing forth his fruits in due season.

Here in the summer we all experience from the farmer's labour some of God's most gracious gifts. Tomatoes and fresh fruit were in the farmer's market yesterday.....and that greatest of all gifts of grace from the God of summer....FRESH PICKED CORN!

With all the delights of gourmet eating, the French and the Chinese Cuisines, there is absolutely nothing better than fresh picked corn.

GOD IS GREAT

GOD IS GOOD

AND I THANK HIM

FOR SUMMER'S FRESH CORN

ALL PRAISE TO THE GOD OF SUMMER!

I hope that these ideas may open for you an awareness of the beauty and grace of God this morning. I hope that this summer time, you experience it's rhythms, and that it will be a SPECIAL, GODLY TIME!

ALL PRAISE TO THE GOD OF THE SUMMER