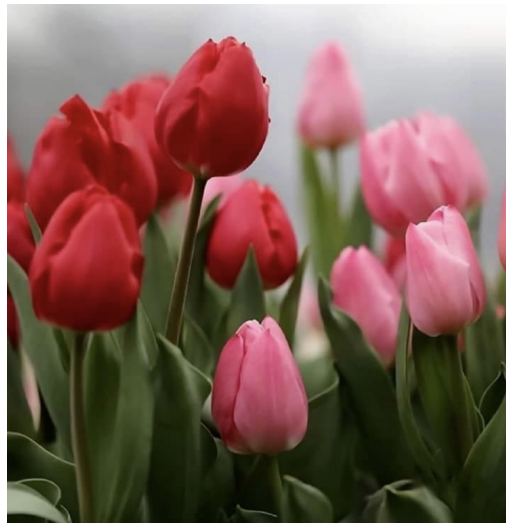


Seasons of Life

8/8/2021

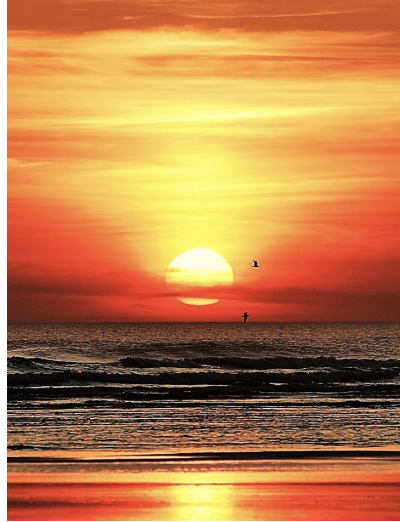
My grown sons were visiting with me recently, and as usual we fell into some interesting conversations. As I was trying to illustrate some thoughts to my youngest who is currently twenty-two years old, I used the analogy of his being in his 'springtime years', while I was in my 'fall years'. Perhaps the stages of life being compared to seasons isn't a new idea, but I remember thinking at the time that this might be something to ponder further.



If I were to break the 'seasons' down into age groups, I would place those from birth to twenty-five as being in their spring years. Spring is a time when all things are made new. The leaves on the trees are starting to return, the flowers are blooming. We see creation waking and stretching toward the sun from underneath the blanket of the cool morning dew.

Those springtime years are all about learning. We learn how to eat, walk, and talk when we are very small. In grade school we learn how to read and write and have our first experiences with friendships and authority. Those awkward and frustrating middle and high school years, I imagine for most, is when we learn more about love and those types of relationships. We start to learn about what we care about most and start forming stronger opinions about the world around us. We wonder about the type of life we hope to pursue after we finish school. Perhaps we develop more concrete religious views during this time, or at least explore what religion is all about.

The next season, of course is summertime. I think the ages of twenty-six through fifty fill the summer years. Summer is a time when we enjoy the sight of children playing outside and the scent of freshly cut grass and yummy steaks cooking on the grill. For some reason the house-cleaning can wait because the pools are open, and it is hot outside. The great feeling of the warm sun on your skin, and then cooling off in the refreshing water, whether it be in the neighborhood pool or the salty ocean. During this season, time just doesn't seem to matter as much.



As full-fledged adults we marry, have kids, buy houses, and hopefully have found the jobs that will support the lifestyles we have dreamed about. Perhaps we work at jobs that we may not love, simply because the rent comes due every month, and we're having to do whatever it takes to survive. We take vacations when we can, we develop interests that allow us to make friends and enjoy time with those we love. Our morals and beliefs are well set, and we live accordingly. When I was in the summer phase of life, I thought I had a pretty good idea about how it all works and was fairly sure of myself. I thought I was good to go... until the fall years snuck up on me.

I'll place the ages of fifty-one to sixty-five into the fall years. Fall is so beautiful, with leaves changing color, falling to the ground. I love the glorious scenes of orange, yellow and red in the trees and haybales and pumpkin landscapes in the neighbor's front yard. The sounds of someone raking leaves and the scent of cinnamon and spice bring to mind the warmth of sitting under a cozy blanket watching the burning embers of a fire.



Fall seems to bring with it a time of reflection, thinking about what was. We might spend moments sharing old stories and looking at old photographs. We take stock in what our lives have been, evaluating our mistakes, and forgiving ourselves for them. It is a time for righting any wrongs, making peace within, and trying to determine what is truly important. If faith wasn't a part of your younger years, this may be the time when you start thinking about what comes after this life and come to terms with your beliefs. Personally, I have never been more certain of my faith in our Creator God than I am right now. The things I thought I knew during my summer years I've realized didn't scratch the surface. I still had so much to learn about other people, relationships, and especially myself. The things we thought were so important, don't mean a thing to me today. It is most definitely a much simpler time of life, and I'm so very grateful.

The last season, of course, is winter. Beginning with the age of sixty-six seems young, but if you ever look at the obituary pages in a newspaper, I don't think I'm that far off. Wintertime is both beautiful and bleak. It brings snow covered hills and white hair on our heads. Bare trees are dry and brittle, much like our skin and bones. During the colder months we enjoy the finale of all holidays, Christmas. Friends and family gather to exchange gifts and celebrate life together. As the New Year approaches, winter knows that time is short, and it won't be long before the sun shines down again and melts the ice to allow the signs of spring to return. From the dust we came, and to the dust we shall return. (Ecclesiastes 3:20)

Your idea of which years fall into the different seasons may differ from mine, but truthfully, the season of life you are in is ultimately up to God, isn't it? None of us really knows when we will leave this life, and caskets come in all shapes and sizes. Life begins and ends during all four seasons, doesn't it? This thought makes me think of the dash (-) between the year we are born, and the year we leave this earth. What will you do with your dash? It is such a small period of time...just a vapor to God. I pray that I will live well with the time I have left. I hope to love well, give of myself well, forgive well. When my Father finally calls me home, get out the party favors, noisemakers, and the champagne, because I will be celebrating my New Year on streets of gold!

