

GraceNotes

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GROWING IN GRACE

“Changing Leaves and Changing Lives”

According to a VP Research survey, fall is America's favorite season of the year. Forty-five percent claim fall as their preference. Summer, spring, and winter were 28%, 24%, and 13% respectively. So, it's not even a close call for the top spot. Fall is the "hands-down winner." The leading reason cited for fall's first place win was the "beautiful foliage." Indeed, who can deny the glorious splendor of a red, orange, yellow, and gold panoramic display of nature's leaf-change pageantry?

If a time-lapse photo was taken in September and October, the result would be like a kaleidoscopic tapestry – a breathtaking sight to behold. Poet Lauren DeStafano describes it as a scene "when everything bursts with its last beauty as if nature had been saving up all year for the grand finale." William Cullen Bryant said that "autumn is the year's last and loveliest smile."

As the so-described scene unfolds, we who are spectators do well to remember that nature is God's canvas. He is the Great Artisan whose brushstrokes splash the colors, paint the vista, and create the magnificent mural. And to those who are willing to discern, a profound message is conveyed: "Change Can Be Beautiful!" We don't always process it in that fashion because we only see the small picture. But if a time-lapse observation of life were possible, the big picture would unveil a magnum opus painting – yes, God's handiwork. In the hands of God, the big picture of life magnifies beauty that already was, draws out beauty that was muted, extracts beauty that was buried, or even creates beauty where there was none. Scripture proclaims that "God brings beauty from ashes" (Is. 61:3) and that He makes everything beautiful in its time" (Eccl. 3:11).

As we continue GROWING IN GRACE together, may the favored season of fall be adorned with the praises of God's people. More specifically, may the great drama of changing leaves remind us that change is God's way of getting us from where we are to where we need to be, serving our greatest good and His highest praise. And that's always beautiful, especially when it includes our conforming to the image of Jesus. Becoming like Jesus is the supreme beauty of life. To be sure "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29) is God's eternal pleasure. So let the change be praised.....

.....in October and every season,

Ed