

The beauty of the Cold

Not everyone loves winter, I get that. I have found that even though I have always enjoyed the winter and the activities that come along with it, that as I grow older, I am less enamoured with the cold. When the first snow flies, even if it is just a skiff on the ground that melts within hours, something changes within us all. The weather, which is always part of our daily conversations, begins to dominate those conversations. Some folks begin to start their hibernation practises, getting ready to stay inside and not because of COVID-19. Others start to dig out their skis, snowmobiles and snow shoes; excited at the potential that the winter holds. Others still (me being one of them) begin to wish we had thought to put our snow tires on weeks ago, rather than waiting until the last minute.

There is something really important and beautiful about winter though, that feelings connected to it aside, I think is worth mentioning. The other morning as I walked through a fine layer of snow in my front yard, I noticed something really important going on around me, nothing! There was nothing going on; no activity, no birds, no vehicles, no dogs in their yards, simply nothing. It wasn't silent like the night time sky I spoke of months ago, but there was just no activity what so ever and it made think about how for generations we have thought of winter as the season of rest; a time when creation, at least this northern part of creation, takes a much-needed break.

It important to note that we always think of the spring as being the new beginning. The time when the plants and the animals all come to life and burst forth in all their splendour, but the truth is that new growth cannot happen without the rest of winter. The beauty of the cold is that it forces creation to pause; forces all of creation to slow our pace and make ourselves ready for the new growth that can happen within us and around us. The new growth doesn't happen though, if we don't first rest.

Biblically speaking winter offers us all sabbath and sabbath doesn't just mean rest as in sleep; its means resting our minds, bodies and souls in life giving ways. For some that is resting by a fire place, while for others it means spending time doing things that they don't get the chance to do during the other seasons, like going for that long walk with snowshoes on to explore and the winter landscape.

Now I know I might be jumping ahead a bit here, talking about enough snow to snowshoe through , we are not quite there yet, but what I hope to suggest to you is that we need, like all of creation, to take the time to rest and rejuvenate; and that is the beauty of the cold, it gives us that time.

It also made me ponder about this time in our lives in general. Some would argue that we have been hibernating for the last eight months; at least not doing the things we would normally do in the ways we would normally do them. I am not so sure I would call this time restful or sabbath time, but it is a time set a part. Though there is much to concerns ourselves with in the midst of a pandemic, I do believe, and have written about, a number of important lessons and learnings that we have all experienced. So, what if we talk about this period of our lives, like we do the winter months? What if this time could be for us a time to slow our pace, look at what we do and how we do it and begin to imagine a the new ways of being the spring could offer in our church, or in our families and/or our places of work?

Tofield Untied church celebrated its 65th Anniversary this past Sunday and as I pondered that in my mind on Sunday it occurred to me that in its sixty-five years of being a church in this community, this has been the longest period of time the church doors have remained closed. The church in Holden would be the

same. What if rather than just lamenting these closures, we talk about them in the same way as I have talked about the beauty of the cold?

I really believe that when this season we are in and have been for the last months comes to an end, the church and all of us will be different. Our spring will come and we will grow and blossom in wonderful and new ways, but we must first be able to let go and let the rest and sabbath time do its work, rather than constantly fight against it.

The beauty of the cold, is that we don't get a choice. Whether we like it or not, its cold and will get a lot colder. So, what if we started thinking about this time that we are in like the cold winter months? We don't get the choice; it just is what it is; our choice is how we respond to it. I want to invite you to pay attention to how you normally respond to the cold season upon us and take some learning from your years of practise and put it to work in this other season we are facing. In this time, we can rest our bodies, our minds and our souls, in whatever way you normally would, but importantly through that rest we can start to imagine what we will be and do when the spring finally comes. For my friends the promise of this life and the promise of our faith is that the new life of spring always comes after the beautiful cold of winter.

Thanks be to God for that!

Blessings to you all,

Sincerely

Rev. Adam Hall