

Springtime's Hope

May 2006

Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

Joel 2:23-24 NIV

Our region of Maryland is in full springtime bloom –alive with the sights and sounds of an earthly resurrection. The lilac bush behind our home is filled with those familiar springtime flowers that smell so good. The robins are back and have already rebuilt their nest in the maple tree near our driveway. Springtime speaks of new life and its offer of hope. The words I've written above are from the prophet Joel; they continue to speak to us today that our God's heart is to bless and not to harm, to give in abundance, not to withhold. Nature's awakening is not by accident, nor is it without intent. It is not "just what the earth does" in the spring. Nature's awakening is meant to be a reminder to us of our God's heart – He is a God who is for us. Consider the flowers. Many women love to get flowers from their husband or their kids on their anniversary or birthday. Deb's grandmother just sent us a picture of her holding a huge bouquet of flowers she just received from us. She wanted us to know her joy in knowing we were thinking of her.

When flowers are given as a gift they speak in two different ways; they are beautiful in and of themselves, but they also tell the recipient that, "I was thinking of you." Springtime flowers are one of the ways that God reminds us that He was / is thinking about us. They are reminders of His love and His care.

Joel's words to the people of God are a reminder to "be glad," and to rejoice in Him. His words are echoed throughout the Bible. Being glad in God is a wonderful thing. It is both spontaneous and planned. Rejoicing in God is like the spontaneous response of young lovers when they see each other after having been apart for some time –there is affection, great joy, and expressions of loving being together. Rejoicing in God is also a planned celebration like a birthday party –we make a decision to celebrate our friend or loved one, and what they mean to us. Rejoicing in God is an appropriate act of faith in response to Him and His goodness toward us. When we rejoice, we are returning the joy and gladness He has brought to our hearts.

The apostle Paul reminds us to rejoice too. He says, "*Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!*"

Phil 4:4-5 (The Message)

Paul's directive ties together the act of rejoicing in God with our actions of love toward those who surround our lives. These two actions are done in response to the fact that He has promised to come back to earth as a Conquering King –our Rescuer; the One who loves us deeply and wants us to be together with Him forever. We are called to rejoice because He is coming back for us, and we are called to convey to the folks around us that we are for them just as surely as our God is for us. Springtime in Maryland –it's a wonderful reminder of God's love for us, and that He is going to return for us. It is also a reminder that we should prepare ourselves in anticipation of His return and our joy-full meeting. With that in mind, let's share our joy with those who surround our lives. Maybe we should send some flowers too!

Pastor Dave